THE AWARD-WINNING INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLER

DARK HORSE BOOKS *presents*

BLACKSAD™

A SILENT HELL

Juan DÍAZ CANALES *Juanjo* GUARNIDO

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A SILENT HELL

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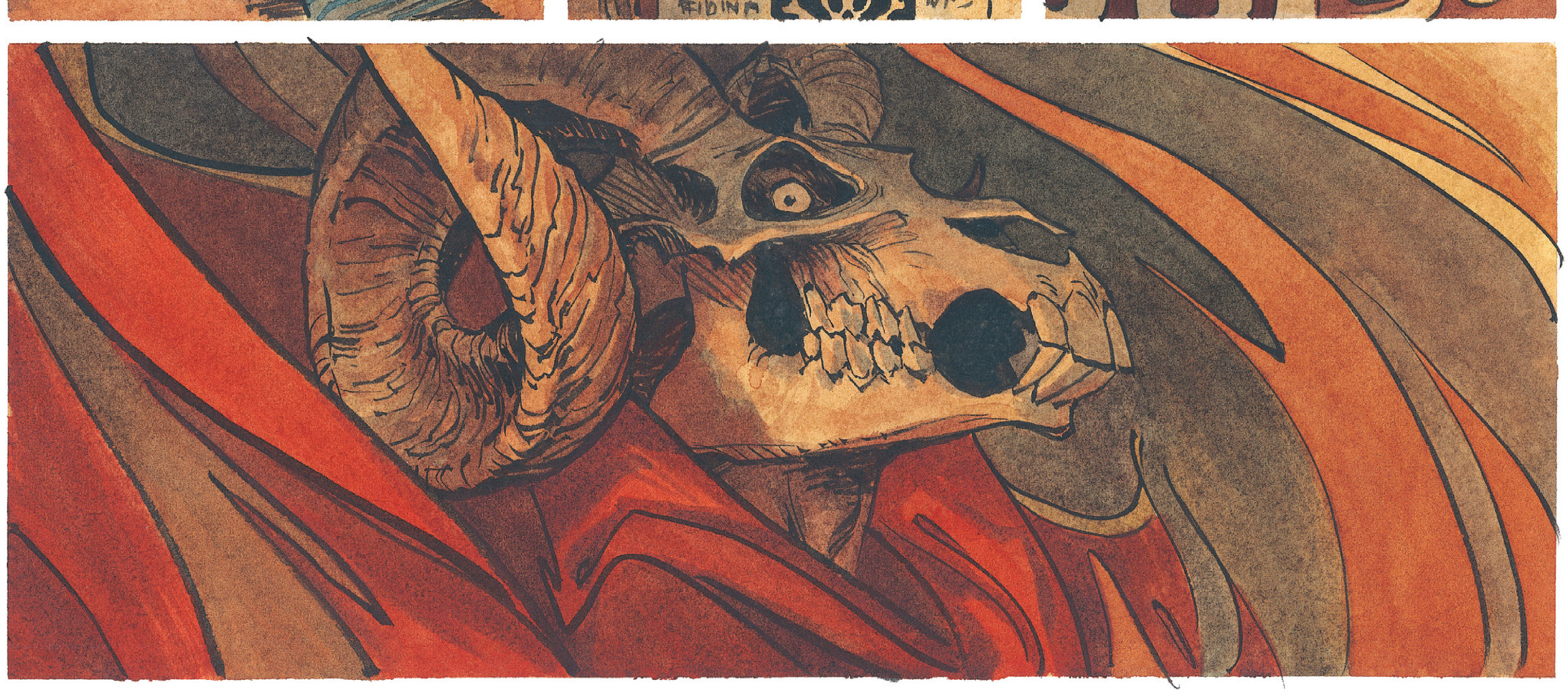

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SARTRE SAYS THAT HELL IS OTHER PEOPLE.

WISE WORDS, BUT I THINK THEY CAPTURE A STATE OF MIND RATHER THAN A UNIVERSAL TRUTH.

I ADMIT, OTHER PEOPLE CAN MAKE LIFE A LIVING HELL.

BUT THEY CAN ALSO BE YOUR PARTNERS IN PARADISE.

FOR ME, HELL IS NOTHINGNESS.

A PLACE WITHOUT FRIENDS, WITHOUT MUSIC, WITHOUT WORDS TO STIMULATE THE IMAGINATION, OR BEAUTY TO AROUSE THE SENSES.

CLAP CLAP CLAP

BRAVO, BRAVO, BRAVO!

I LOVE THIS CITY! THE NIGHT'S OFF TO A SWELL START!

AND YOU KNOW? THE LONGER WE STAY, THE HOTTER THE DANCERS GET...

LISTEN, WEEK, THE GUY WE WERE SUPPOSED TO MEET ISN'T COMING...

YOU MEAN JUNIOR HARPER? ... THAT'S *HIS* LOSS!

I'M GOING TO THE EBONY LOUNGE TO ASK SOME QUESTIONS.

OKAY. I'LL LET YOU KNOW HOW THE SHOW ENDS.

BETTER HEAD OVER TO THIS HOTEL INSTEAD. JUNIOR'S BEEN HOLED UP THERE SINCE HE GOT OUT. MAYBE YOU CAN FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM.

HE MIGHT KNOW WHERE SEBASTIAN'S HIDING...

NEW ORLEANS 'N JAZZ FUN

JAZZ 'N FUN LOUNGE

LIQUORS

BEER

CALL ME IF YOU FIND ANYTHING...

WHY DOES HE ALWAYS DO THIS TO ME? THAT BUM! IF I'D KNOWN, I NEVER WOULD HAVE GOTTEN HIM THE JOB.

STATE PENITENTIARY

TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, MR. LACHAPELLE...

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...WHEN WHAT'S NEWS ASKED FOR A PIECE ON THE NEW ORLEANS BLUES SCENE, I NEVER THOUGHT I'D END UP STROLLING THROUGH THE COUNTRY'S LARGEST PRISON...

HA, HA, HA! CALL ME FAUST, MY FRIEND.

SADLY, THIS PENITENTIARY'S ROLL CALL READS LIKE A LIST OF "GREATEST HITS."

AND I KNOW WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT. MY RECORD LABEL SPECIALIZES IN, SHALL WE SAY, "RACE" MUSIC.

GENTLEMEN, IF I COULD HAVE JUST A MOMENT...

REALLY, THE WARDEN MIGHT HAVE BEEN GRACIOUS ENOUGH TO SPARE US A BODYGUARD... NEVER MIND HIS "LACK OF RESOURCES."

CLICK!

PERFECT... THANKS!

HE'S NOT CRAZY ABOUT JOURNALISTS SNOOPING AROUND HIS TERRITORY. BUT DON'T WORRY... YOU'RE SAFE.

?

THAT'S RIGHT, PAL. NO NEED TO WORRY...

...AS LONG AS YOU'RE WITH FAUST LACHAPELLE, YOU'VE GOT NOTHIN' TO FEAR.

4

HE HAS EVERY JUDGE AND DISTRICT ATTORNEY IN THIS TOWN...

...EATIN' FROM THE PALM OF HIS HAND.

MEET JUNIOR HARPER, ONE OF THE BEST MUSICIANS ON THE "LACHAPELLE RECORDS" LABEL... HE'S HERE PAYING HIS DEBT TO SOCIETY...

YOU DON'T LOOK SO GOOD, FAUST. BETTER NOT NEGLECT YOUR HEALTH. EVEN A COMMON COLD, AT YOUR AGE...

UH... I'VE GOT WHAT I NEED. SHALL WE GO?

AU REVOIR, FAUST! ONCE I MAKE PAROLE, I PROMISE T'COME SEE YOU...

...AN' TALK ABOUT THE GOOD OL' DAYS...

THANKS FOR BRINGING ME HERE. I'M SORRY IF IT WAS A BIT ROUGH FOR YOU...

NOT FOR MY HEALTH... BUT NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, I AM IN NEED OF SOMEONE DISCREET TO LEND A HAND WITH A PRIVATE MATTER. I UNDERSTAND YOU MAY KNOW JUST THE RIGHT PERSON...

KOF! KOF!

ARE YOU OKAY?

IT'S FINE. IT WILL PASS... DO YOU MIND DRIVING?

IF THERE'S ANYTHING ELSE I CAN DO...

THIS MIGHT COME AS A SURPRISE TO AN OUTSIDER...

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...BUT MADAME GIBRALTAR IS SOMETHING OF A LOCAL CELEBRITY, AND HER MEDICINAL ARTS ARE WELL RESPECTED. SHE CLAIMS TO BE THE REINCARNATION OF MARIE LAVEAU...

AND SOME CLAIM THAT CATS ALWAYS LAND ON THEIR FEET, BUT I WOULDN'T THROW MYSELF OFF THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING TO TEST THAT THEORY... WHY DID YOU CALL ME, MONSIEUR FAUST?

I HAVE CANCER, MR. BLACKSAD. THE DOCTORS HAVE ALREADY GIVEN ME UP FOR DEAD... AND I WOULD BE, IF NOT FOR MADAME'S CARE.

BUT BEFORE I GO, I HAVE SOME LOOSE ENDS TO TIE UP. I NEED TO FIND SEBASTIAN "LITTLE HAND" FLETCHER.

THE PIANO PLAYER? I LOVE HIS MUSIC...

FOR AS LONG AS I'VE KNOWN HIM, I'VE DONE EVERYTHING I COULD FOR HIM, PERSONALLY AND PROFESSIONALLY. BUT HE'S BEEN MISSING FOR MONTHS NOW.

ZAS!

THAT DOESN'T NECESSARILY MEAN HE'S IN DANGER...

HE'S A HEROIN ADDICT. I'M AFRAID HE'S IN DANGER OF DOING SOMETHING STUPID.

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"LITTLE HAND" Fletcher
NEW LP
LACHAPELLE RECORDS
YOU SEE, I'M NOT JUST A PATRON TO SEBASTIAN... IF ANYTHING WERE TO HAPPEN TO HIM, IT WOULD BE LIKE LOSING A SON...
MAYBE "MADAME" CAN FIND HIM IN HER CRYSTAL BALL...
I APPRECIATE YOUR DARK SENSE OF HUMOR, BLACKSAD, BUT IF I HAD YOU COME ALL THIS WAY, IT'S ONLY BECAUSE MR. WEEKLY ASSURED ME...
...THAT YOU'RE JUST THE PERSON TO FIND SEBASTIAN WITHOUT MAKING THE FUR FLY...
WILL YOU TAKE THE CASE?
YOU PUT ON THAT WHOLE TOUGH GUY BIT, JUST TO TAKE THE JOB ANYWAY...
IMPERIAL SHOES
America's Greatest Clothiers
STEIN'S
LACHAPELLE RECORDS
PIANOS
IT'S ALL MARKETING, WEEK. YOU'VE GOT TO PLAY THE PART: THE HARD-BOILED MOVIE P.I. IT'S WHAT THEY EXPECT.
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VRROOOOMM!!

LOOK OUT!

SCRREEEEECH!!

WELL, WELL... IT SEEMS I'M LATE FOR THE MEETING.

...AND AS SOON AS I FOUND OUT THAT ARROGANT, NO-GOOD FAUST WAS GOING TO HIRE ANOTHER DETECTIVE, I SAID TO MYSELF: NO COLLEAGUE DESERVES TO BE CHEATED LIKE I WAS BY THAT SWINDLER.

LIKE I ALWAYS SAY, WE PROFESSIONALS SHOULD STICK TOGETHER...

I'M PRETTY SURE I'D RATHER BE SWINDLED THAN CRUSHED UNDER THE WHEELS OF YOUR CAR.

...UNTIL THAT SWINE LACHAPELLE FIRED ME AND BROKE OUR CONTRACT...

HO, HO, HO! TED LEEMAN, PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR. I WAS ON THE CASE OF SEBASTIAN "LITTLE HAND"...

MAYBE HE DIDN'T LIKE YOUR DRIVING...

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OR MAYBE, LIKE FAUST TELLS IT, YOU ASKED FOR MORE AND MORE MONEY, AND THREATENED BLACKMAIL... ALL VERY "PROFESSIONAL"!

I SEE HE'S ALREADY POISONED YOU WITH HIS LIES.

HE TOLD US A FEW OTHER LIES, TOO, LIKE THE ONE ABOUT YOUR TASTE FOR ALCOHOL...

...AND THAT WHEN YOU'RE SOUSED, YOU'RE NOT EXACTLY A MODEL OF DISCRETION...

THAT SON OF A BITCH!

I WAS GOING TO INVITE YOU FOR A DRINK, BUT I SEE WHOSE SIDE YOU'VE TAKEN...

LIKE I ALWAYS SAY, THESE ARE TOUGH TIMES FOR HONEST PROFESSIONALS.

WEEKLY, IF I EVER START ACTING LIKE THAT, REMIND ME TO GET THE HELL OUT OF THIS JOB.

VROOOOOOOOOO

SCREEECH!

SCREEEEECH

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THE SPOT WHERE JAZZ WAS BORN

WE LIVE IN A GREAT NATION; ONE IN WHICH FREE ENTERPRISE ENABLES OUR EVERY DESIRE TO BE GRATIFIED. JUST LOOK AT ANY SUPERMARKET...

...AND IF YOU CAN'T FIND WHAT YOU WANT, DON'T WORRY. SOONER OR LATER SOMEONE WILL COME UP WITH A WAY TO SATISFY ALL YOUR NEEDS.

BUMP!

PERFECT. THEN I'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE... BECAUSE I'LL BE THE HAPPIEST CAT IN THE WORLD IF I CAN JUST FIND SEBASTIAN FLETCHER.

WELCOME TO THE *EBONY*, PAL...

...WHERE YOU CAN FIND ALL KINDS OF HAPPINESS.

SEBASTIAN... A GREAT MUSICIAN... AND AN EXCELLENT CLIENT! BUT IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE HE'S COME BY, AM I RIGHT?

WELL, THAT'S CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION, BROTHER. WE "PLEAD THE FIFTH." HA, HA, HA!

PARDON MY IGNORANCE OF LEGAL MATTERS... BUT I'M IN A HURRY, AND I KNOW YOU DEALT SEBASTIAN SOME HEROIN... SO, WHERE IS HE?

MY LIPS ARE SEALED, BROTHER!

CRACK!

EEEEEE!!

CRASH!

I'VE BEEN WATCHING YOU FOR DAYS... WHO'S THE GUY IN THE MASK?

I DON'T KNOW! HE PAYS WELL, THAT'S ALL...

...AND WE DID WHAT HE TOLD US... WE SOLD SEBASTIAN SOME BAD DOPE!

WHERE IS SEBASTIAN?!

NO IDEA, MAN! MAYBE HE BIT THE DUST... THAT SHIT WE GAVE HIM WAS STRAIGHT RAT POISON...

DO YOU MIND?

11

ST CHARLES
OLDE GROVE

HELLO, HANNAH.
OH!
SEBASTIAN!
BUT... WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
SINCE WHEN CAN'T A HUSBAND PICK UP HIS LITTLE LADY AFTER WORK?
I THOUGHT I'D NEVER SEE YOU AGAIN...
CALM DOWN, BABY. YOU DON'T THINK I COULD RUN OUT ON YOU WHEN YOU'RE IN THIS CONDITION?

YOU HAVEN'T BEEN HOME IN WEEKS... I WAS SURE THAT SOMETHING AWFUL HAD HAPPENED.

WELL, HERE I AM. THIS IS OUR BIG NIGHT, SUGAR. AFTER THE GIG I'LL COME ON HOME, AND WE CAN START ALL OVER AGAIN...

I HAVE SOME GOOD NEWS FOR YOU, TOO, SWEETHEART. FAUST WAS BY THE HOUSE, LOOKING FOR YOU. HE WANTS YOU TO RECORD A NEW ALBUM...

YOU IDIOT! I TOLD YOU NOT TO TALK TO THAT BASTARD EVER AGAIN!

BUT... HE'S A GOOD MAN, AND HE'S BEEN SUCH A BIG HELP TO US... HE JUST WANTS YOU TO FOCUS ON YOUR MUSIC, AND GET OFF THE DOPE...

ALL LIES! IF YOU'RE ON HIS SIDE, YOU JUST FORGET ABOUT ME EVER COMIN' HOME!

SEB!

SEB, COME BACK!

I'D RATHER HIT UP A MILLION TIMES THAN WORK WITH THAT MONSTER!

SEB, NO...!

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OOF... OOF...

AAAAH...

AAAH...AAH!

AAAAHH!!

AAAAAAH...!

HANNAH!

NO, I'M NOT LOOKING FOR RECORDS BY SEBASTIAN FLETCHER. I'VE GOT THEM ALL. IT'S SEBASTIAN HIMSELF I WANT.

BLUES

SPECIAL

BARGAIN

Special! LP 20¢

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HE HASN'T BEEN HERE IN A LONG TIME...

RCHAPELLE BIG BAND

BARGAIN PRICE

LATELY HE'D RATHER SPEND HIS DOUGH ON DRUGS THAN ON VINYL...

YOU'D BE BETTER OFF ASKING ONE OF HIS DRINKING BUDDIES, LIKE BIG BILL LENOIR.

WHERE CAN I FIND HIM?

IT'S A LONG LONG LANE ♪ THAT HAS NO TURNING ♪ AND IT'S A FIRE THAT ALWAYS KEEPS ON BURNING...

?

YOU JUST DID...

MISTER DEVIL DOWN BELOW ♪ PITCHFORK IN HIS HAND ♪ THAT'S WHERE YOU'RE GONNA GO ♪ DO YOU UNDERSTAND? ♪

SHOP

ONE HOUR PARKING

'COS THE DEVIL'S GONNA GET YOU ♪ THE DEVIL'S ♪ GONNA GET YOU

♪ YEAH THE DEVIL'S GONNA GET YOU ♪ MAN, AS SURE AS YOU'S BORN! ♪

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CHEERFUL TUNE.

JUST LIKE LIFE, BROTHER! CAN I INTEREST YOU IN SOMETHING FROM MY CART?

LITTLE BRATS! LEAVE THAT STUFF ALONE!!

I DON'T MEAN TO HOLD YOU UP... I JUST WANTED TO ASK A COUPLE QUESTIONS ABOUT SEBASTIAN FLETCHER...

HEY, BROTHER, I CAN TELL YOU A LOT ABOUT SEBASTIAN! NOT MANY FOLKS KNOW THAT SEBASTIAN, JUNIOR HARPER, POOR JOACHIM, AND I STARTED OUT TOGETHER AS STREET MUSICIANS...

WE MADE OUR INSTRUMENTS OUT OF BOXES, CANS... WHATEVER IT TOOK, MAN! AND WE WOULD'VE GONE FAR, TOO, BUT FOR THE DAMN WAR!

JOACHIM WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO ENLISTED, BUT WHEN HE GOT BACK, HE WASN'T EVER QUITE THE SAME... WHERE'D YOU SAY SEBASTIAN WAS?

I WAS HOPING YOU COULD TELL ME THAT...

HA, HA, HA! THAT DAMN SEBASTIAN! IT'S BEEN YEARS SINCE I'VE SEEN HIM, BUT IF YOU RUN INTO HIM, YOU TELL HIM NOT TO FORGET OL' BIG BILL LENOIR. YOU TELL HIM TO COME BY AND WE'LL THROW BACK A FEW, JUST LIKE THE GOOD OL' DAYS!

WILL DO.

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?!

JOE'S BAR

T'IEF, RAB'N! DU'TTY BUZZUT!

STEAD'UH ONNUHRUBBLE WU'K!

CHUPID WAAMENT, WURRUM!

LIFE EVERLASTING A CHEST RUB MADE BY DR. DUPRÉ JUST PUT IT INTO A PILLOW OR SMOKE AS AN INHALANT TO TREAT ASTHMA AND INFLUENZA DR. DUPRÉ MIRACULOUS FORMULA

?!

IT'S GULLAH, A SOUTHERN DIALECT THEY SPEAK IN CALDONIA.

LENOIR WAS BORN THERE. JUST LIKE JOACHIM, JUNIOR, AND SEBASTIAN. AND MY FATHER, TOO...

JOE'S BAR

MY NAME'S THOMAS. I'M FAUST LACHAPELLE'S SON.

PLEASURE.

DO YOU LIKE CREOLE FOOD? LET ME TAKE YOU OUT TO EAT.

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I'M SORRY ABOUT YOUR FATHER.

THANK YOU. HE'S NOT DOING WELL. I THINK THAT BEING SICK HAS AFFECTED HIS MIND...

...AND THOSE VOODOO TRICKS AREN'T HELPING. THAT OLD HARPY IS PRACTICALLY HOLDING HIM HOSTAGE.

HIS ILLNESS IS BAD NEWS FOR THOSE OF US WHO LOVE JAZZ...

FAUST WAS A MEDIOCRE MUSICIAN, BUT AS A PRODUCER HE HAS A SENSATIONAL KNACK FOR NEW TALENT. IF NOTHING ELSE, HE DESERVES THE HIGHEST RESPECT FOR BRINGING THE WORLD A MUSICAL GENIUS LIKE SEBASTIAN.

THOUGH IT SEEMS LIKE THEIR RELATIONSHIP EXTENDS BEYOND THE STRICTLY PROFESSIONAL...

HE'S BEEN LIKE A FATHER TO SEBASTIAN. AT TIMES I THINK HE SAW HIM AS THE BRILLIANT MUSICIAN THAT HE HIMSELF COULD NEVER BE. BUT GENIUS DOESN'T GIVE YOU CARTE BLANCHE TO ACT LIKE AN IDIOT...

I GET THE SENSE THAT YOU'RE NOT EXACTLY DYING TO FIND OUT WHERE HE IS...

DON'T GET ME WRONG, BLACKSAD. SEBASTIAN AND I HAVE BEEN THROUGH A LOT TOGETHER. HE'S LIKE A LITTLE BROTHER TO ME.

BUT HE DISAPPEARED OF HIS OWN FREE WILL AND ABANDONED HIS PREGNANT WIFE.

LOOK, BLACKSAD... MY FATHER ISN'T LONG FOR THIS WORLD. WE NEED EVERY PENNY THE FAMILY HAS, TO COVER HIS MEDICAL TREATMENT.

ARE YOU FIRING ME?

I'M ASKING YOU TO PLEASE DROP THE CASE.

I'M NOT ASKIN' YOU TO *HIRE* ME, CARL. JUST LET ME PLAY TONIGHT!

SEB...

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I'M SORRY, SEBASTIAN. I LIKE YOU, I'M YOUR BIGGEST FAN, BUT THE LAST TIME YOU WERE HERE, YOU WERE SO STONED YOU COULDN'T STRING TWO NOTES TOGETHER.

BUT I'M *GOOD* NOW! AND I WANNA PERFORM MY NEW PIECE...

IT'S THE BEST MUSIC I'VE EVER WRITTEN! IT'S CALLED "PIZEN BLUES." LOOK, I'VE GOT THE LYRICS RIGHT HERE...

!

I SEE HOW YOU SPENT ALL THE UP-FRONT CASH I GAVE YOU... FORGET IT, SEBASTIAN.

DON'T FUCK ME OVER, CARL! I'VE MADE YOU MORE SCRATCH THAN ANYONE ELSE!

THE WILD NOTE IS WHAT IT IS, THANKS TO THESE HANDS...

OKAY. TONIGHT, AFTER THE SHARKEY QUINTET. BUT PROMISE ME YOU'LL KEEP THAT SHIT FOR AFTERWARDS...

I SWEAR IT, CARL. I SWEAR IT BY MY UNBORN CHILD!

WAAAAAH!

IT'S A BOY!

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HANNAH, I HAVE TO KNOW IF YOU'VE SEEN SEBASTIAN LATELY. IT'S A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH...

I... CONGRATULATIONS.

SHE NEEDS HER REST, BLACKSAD.

DO YOU REALLY THINK THIS IS THE BEST TIME? FOR CHRIST'S SAKE! SHE'S JUST HAD A BABY!

WAAAAH!

DON'T PLAY GOOD SAMARITAN WITH ME, THOMAS! THIS KID'S ABOUT TO BE LEFT WITHOUT A FATHER, AND YOU HAVEN'T LIFTED A FINGER TO FIND HIM!

ONE CAN LIVE WITHOUT A FATHER...

FINALLY, WE SEE THE REAL THOMAS BEHIND THE MASK. THE JEALOUS, ABANDONED SON...

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WAAAAAH! WAAAAAH!

PLEASE... PLEASE... SEBASTIAN DID COME TO SEE ME. TONIGHT.

HE SAID HE'D BE BACK AFTER HIS SHOW, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHERE HE'S PLAYING...

THOUGH THERE IS SOMETHING THAT MIGHT HELP YOU.

IN THE DRAWER...

THEY'RE SONG LYRICS. I DON'T UNDERSTAND THEM. THEY'RE IN THAT DIALECT...

...BUT WHEN I SHOWED THEM TO MONSIEUR FAUST, HE GOT VERY UPSET.

WE'RE GONNA TAKE A SHORT BREAK AND BE BACK IN HALF AN HOUR...

YOU PROMISED ME YOU WOULDN'T BUY ANY MORE DRUGS!

HA, HA, HA! I PROMISE!

AND IT'S YOUR FAULT THAT I'M PARANOID! PROMISE ME YOU WON'T EVER DISAPPEAR AGAIN!

THESE ARE THE LYRICS TO A GREAT SONG... "PIZEN BLUES." IT'LL BLOW *EVERYONE'S* MIND WHEN THEY HEAR IT FOR THE FIRST TIME...

HA, HA, HA! YOU MEAN THIS?

SILLY! DON'T MAKE FUN OF ME! I WORRY ABOUT YOU...

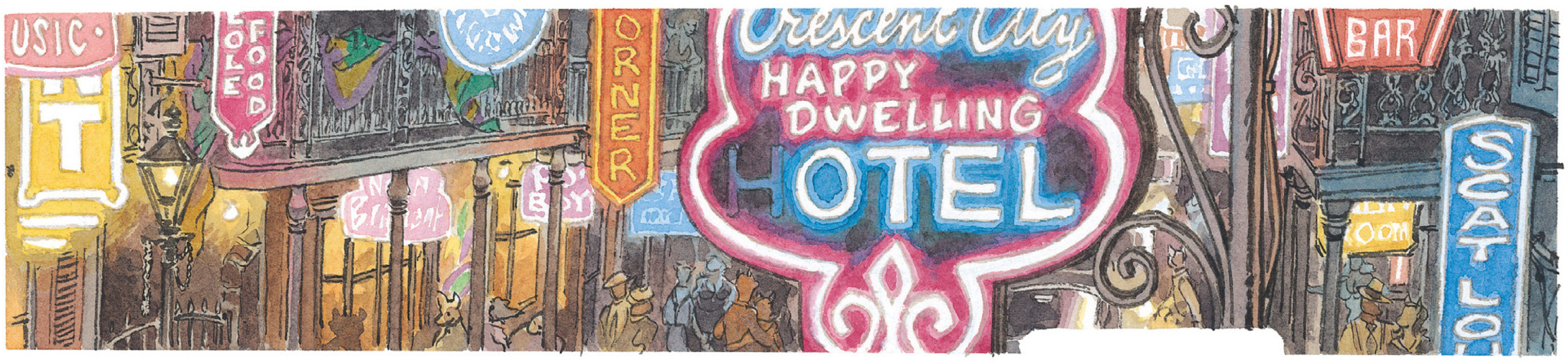
IF IT'S A BOY, LET'S CALL HIM JOACHIM.

HEY, DON'T LAUGH! JOACHIM'S THE NAME OF MY BEST FRIEND!

JOACHIM WAS A GREAT MUSICIAN! BUT HE DIED A FEW YEARS AGO, OF TUBERCULOSIS. HIS LUNGS NEVER DID WORK TOO WELL...

HA, HA, HA! THAT'S A FUNNY NAME!

OH? I DON'T KNOW HIM...


USIC
FOOD
ORNER
Crescent City
HAPPY
DWELLING
HOTEL
BAR
SEAFO
ROOM

HI, SUGAR. YOU LOOKIN' FOR A GOOD TIME?

C'MON IN, HONEY... YOU COME WITH ME AND I'LL SHOW YOU A COUPLE MAGIC TRICKS...
PLEASE, LADIES, LET ME GO. I'M ON DUTY!

ARE YOU A COP? I THOUGHT I SMELLED SOMETHING!
GO CLEAN YOUR RIFLE SOMEWHERE ELSE, SUGAR!

'SCUSE ME, CHÉRI.

PLOF!
EEEEEE!

AND YOU CAN BET I WON'T GET ANY CREDIT FOR THIS, EITHER!

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HERE IT IS...

HELLO? JUNIOR HARPER...?

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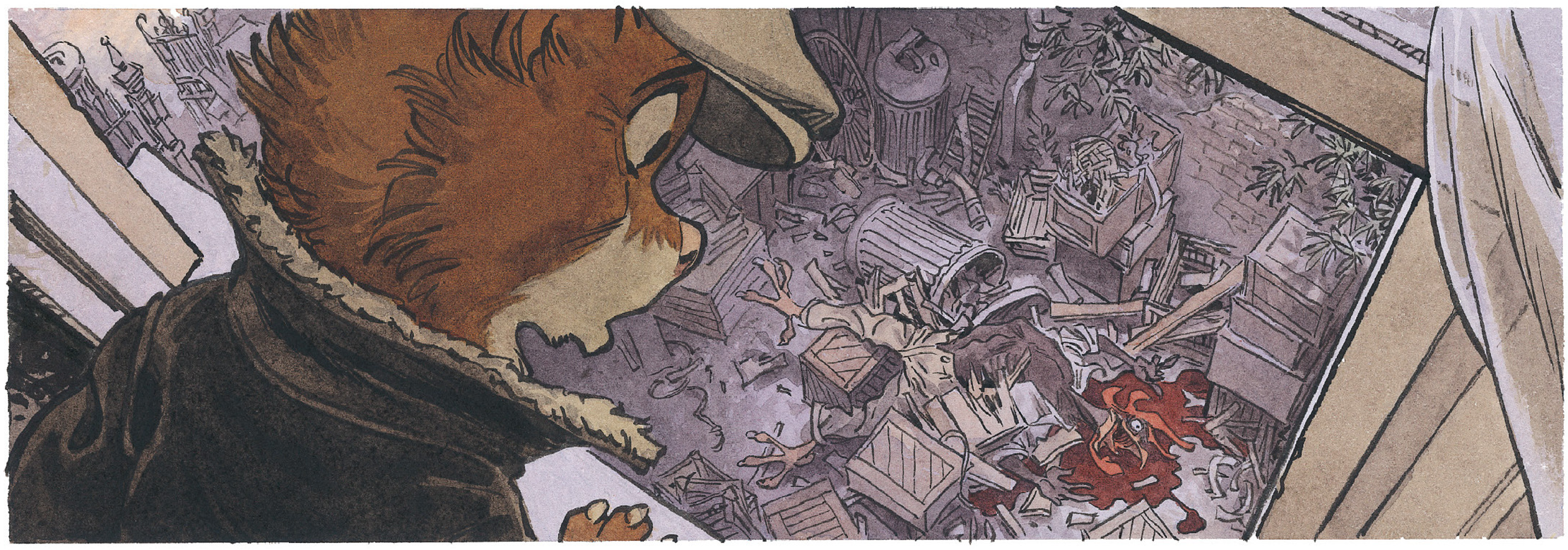
ANYONE HERE?
301

OH, MY GOD!



GODDAMN SNITCH! NO NEED TO CALL YOUR LITTLE COP FRIENDS... THEY'RE ALREADY HERE!

BAD NEWS, JOHN. SEEMS HARPER TRIED TO FLY OUT THE WINDOW, BUT FORGOT HE HAD A BUM PAIR OF WINGS...
SUICIDE? I'D SAY MURDER'S MORE LIKELY... HAVE YOU FOUND SEBASTIAN?

NOT YET. BUT NOW I KNOW WHERE TO LOOK. CHECK OUT ALL THE CLUBS THAT HAVE LIVE MUSIC TONIGHT...

OKAY. BUT BE CAREFUL, JOHN. THIS CITY IS QUICKLY LOSING ITS CHARM.

I'M OFF TO SEE FAUST. THERE'S SOMETHING I HAVE TO ASK HIM.

PRESIDENT

YOU SHOULD TAKE BETTER CARE OF YOURSELF, DAD, AND STAY IN BED.

NONSENSE... KOF! THE DOCTORS SAID A BIT OF FRESH AIR WOULD DO ME SOME GOOD. HAVE YOU WORKED OUT YOUR PROBLEMS WITH CLAIRE?

COMPLETELY. SHE WANTS A DIVORCE...

AND THE MONEY? AND THE HOUSES?

HERS... AND HER NEW BOYFRIEND'S. ALL I HAVE LEFT ARE THE BILLS...

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME COMING. I'M SORRY...

NO, DAD, THE ONLY THING YOU'RE SORRY ABOUT IS THAT I'LL NEVER GIVE YOU ANY GRAND-CHILDREN...

WHY DO YOU SAY THAT?

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BECAUSE I'VE HEARD IT OFTEN ENOUGH...

ABOUT AS OFTEN AS I'VE HEARD YOUR STORY OF THE "ABANDONED SON."

LISTEN, PAPA, LET'S BE DONE ONCE AND FOR ALL WITH THESE STUPID FIGHTS. WHY WON'T YOU LET ME HELP YOU? WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF TIME...

RIGHT. I SEE YOU DIDN'T WASTE ANY TIME RUNNING TO CONSOLE SEBASTIAN'S WIFE...

I UNDERSTAND THIS IS A ROUGH PERIOD FOR YOU. IF WHAT YOU WANT IS MONEY...

GOODBYE, DAD.

KOF! KOF! KOF!

27

WEEKLY WAS WRONG. IT'S NOT THAT NEW ORLEANS WAS LOSING ITS CHARM. HE JUST WASN'T LOOKING FOR IT IN THE RIGHT PLACE...

...LIKE THE HOME OF THE DELUSIONAL MADAME GIBRALTAR, FOR INSTANCE, WITH ITS CHARMING SIGHT OF A MAN DYING IN RHYTHM TO AN ABSURD DANCE.

THAT'S ENOUGH FOR TODAY... I'M PARCHED! BRING US A COUPLE OF BOURBONS. WITH LOTS OF ICE. THEN I'LL GO HOME.

I'M SORRY TO INTERRUPT THE BALL, MONSIEUR FAUST. I KNOW FOR SURE THAT SOMEONE'S TRYING TO KILL SEBASTIAN, AND I THINK I KNOW WHO IT IS. I NEED YOUR HELP. IT'S ABOUT THAT SONG...

HANNAH SHOWED IT TO ME A FEW DAYS AGO, AND I ADMIT, IT WAS LESS THAN REASSURING...

WHAT DOES *PIZEN BLUES* MEAN?

PIZEN IS "POISON" IN GULLAH.

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IN MY OPINION, IT'S A REFERENCE TO HEROIN. THE REST OF THE SONG IS A FAREWELL NOTE, FROM A DRUG ADDICT AT DEATH'S DOOR...

WELL, THE BAD NEWS DOESN'T STOP THERE. JUNIOR HARPER JUST DIED, AND YOUR SON WANTS TO FIRE ME. HE BELIEVES THERE ARE BETTER WAYS TO INVEST YOUR MONEY.

WHAT?! POOR JUNIOR!

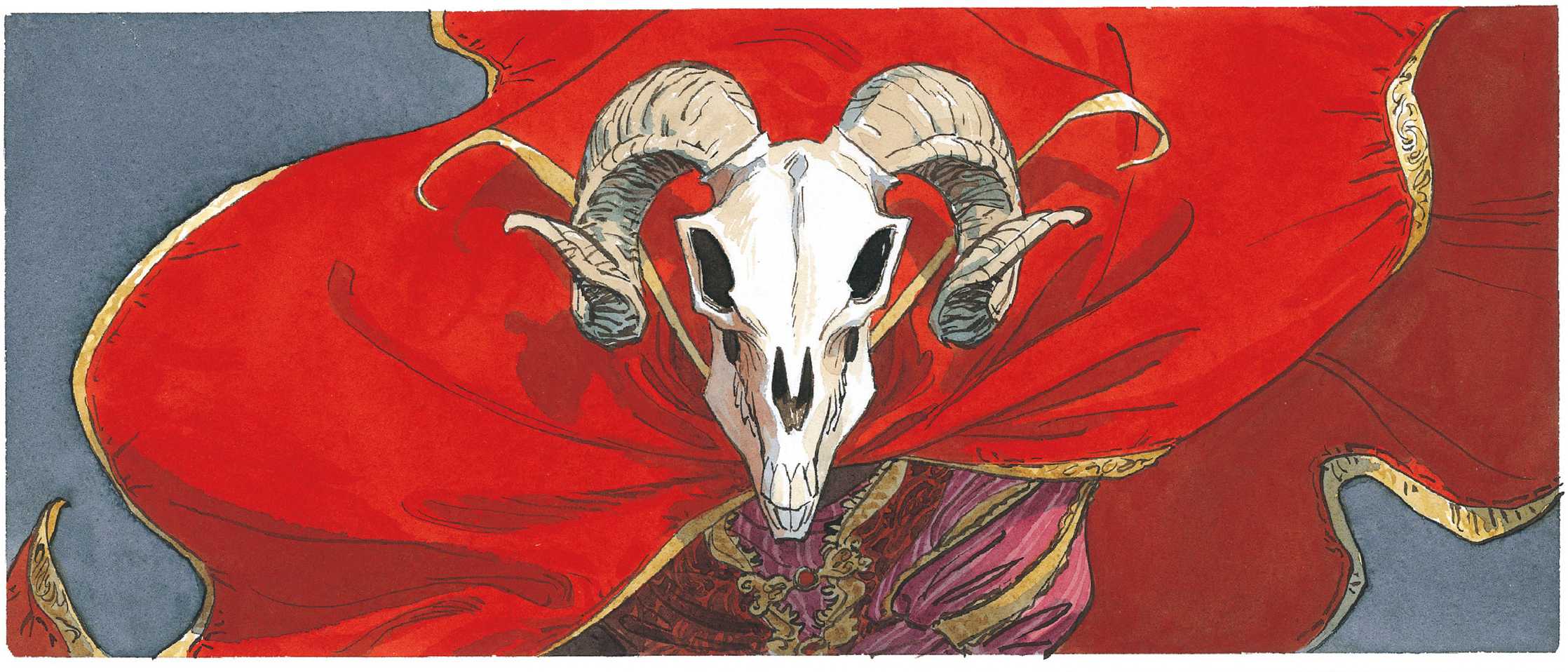
I AM TRULY SORRY, BUT HE AND I HAD GROWN APART THESE PAST FEW YEARS.

AS FOR THOMAS, WHAT I DO WITH MY MONEY IS NOT UP TO HIM.

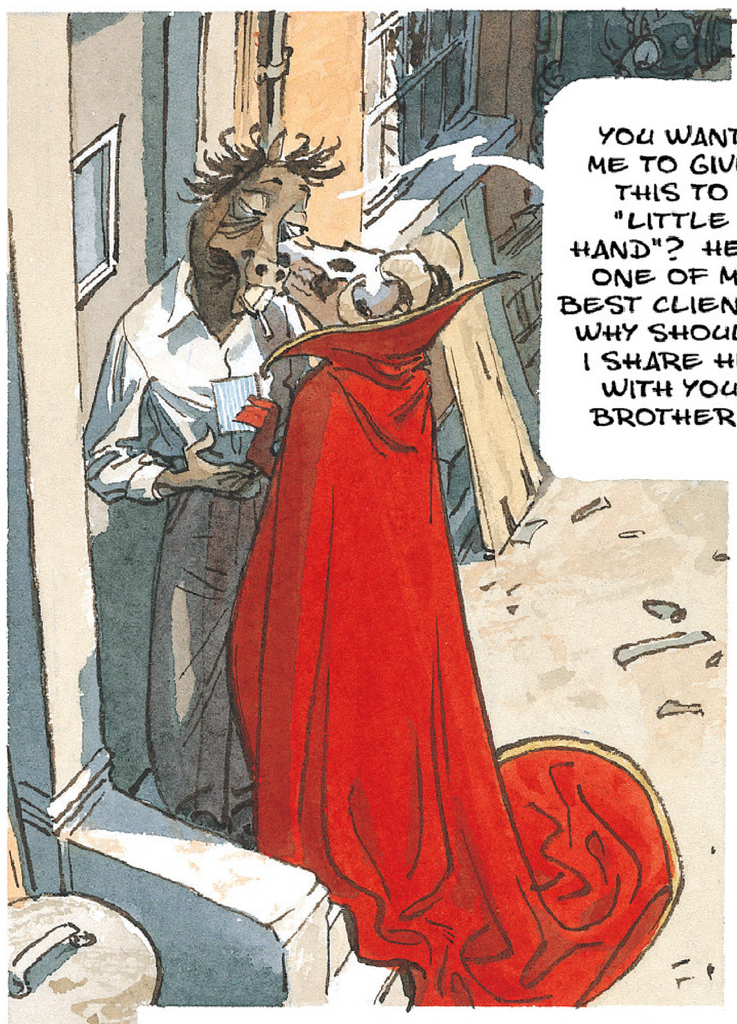
IN ANY CASE, I AGREE THAT YOU SHOULDN'T SQUANDER IT ON THIS WITCH DOCTOR.

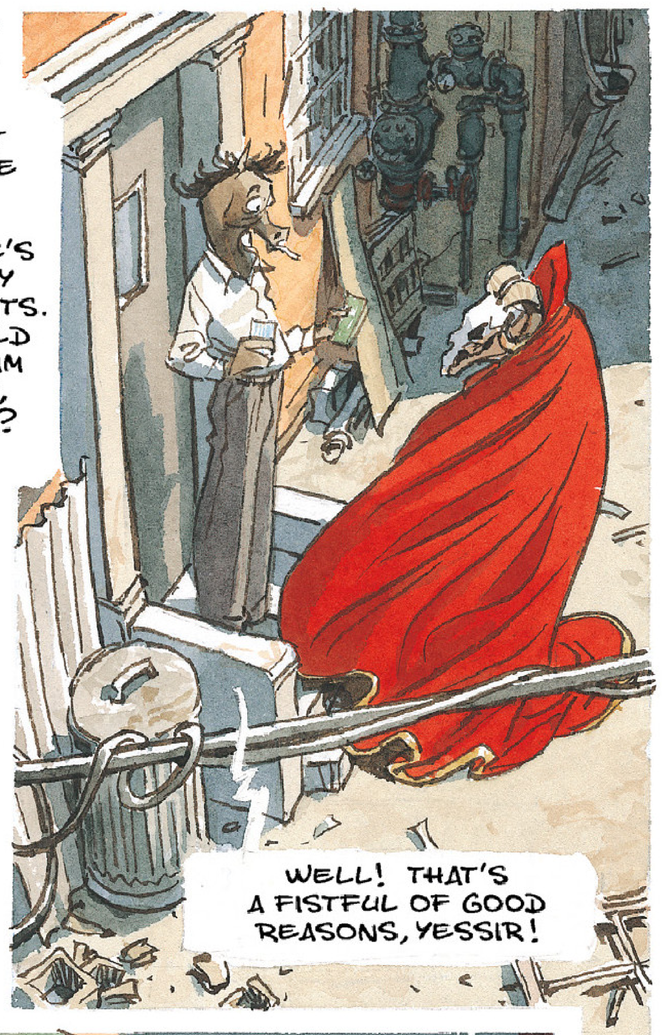
THANKS FOR THE BOURBON.

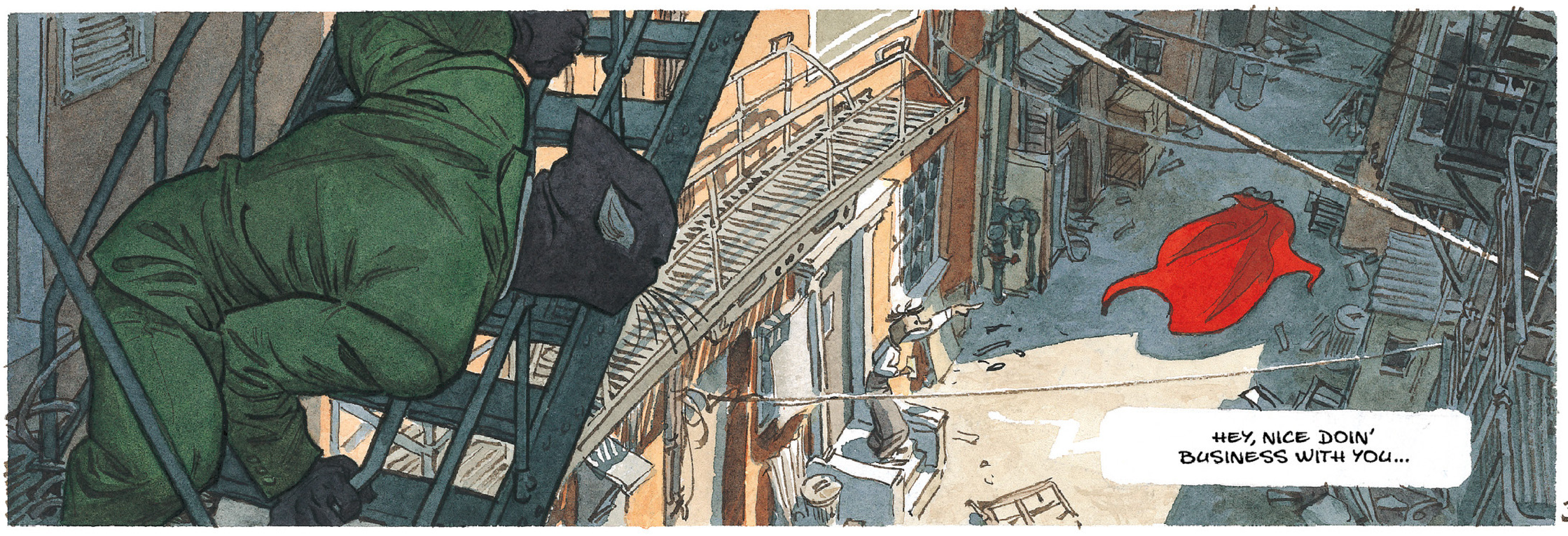
MARDI GRAS HAD ENDED TWO DAYS EARLIER, BUT I WAS GETTING THE FEELING THAT PEOPLE IN THIS CITY WORE THEIR MASKS ALL YEAR LONG.



WELL, WELL, LOOK AT THIS! DEATH IS HERE IN PERSON TO "UNDERTAKE" A LITTLE BUSINESS...


YOU WANT ME TO GIVE THIS TO "LITTLE HAND"? HE'S ONE OF MY BEST CLIENTS. WHY SHOULD I SHARE HIM WITH YOU, BROTHER?

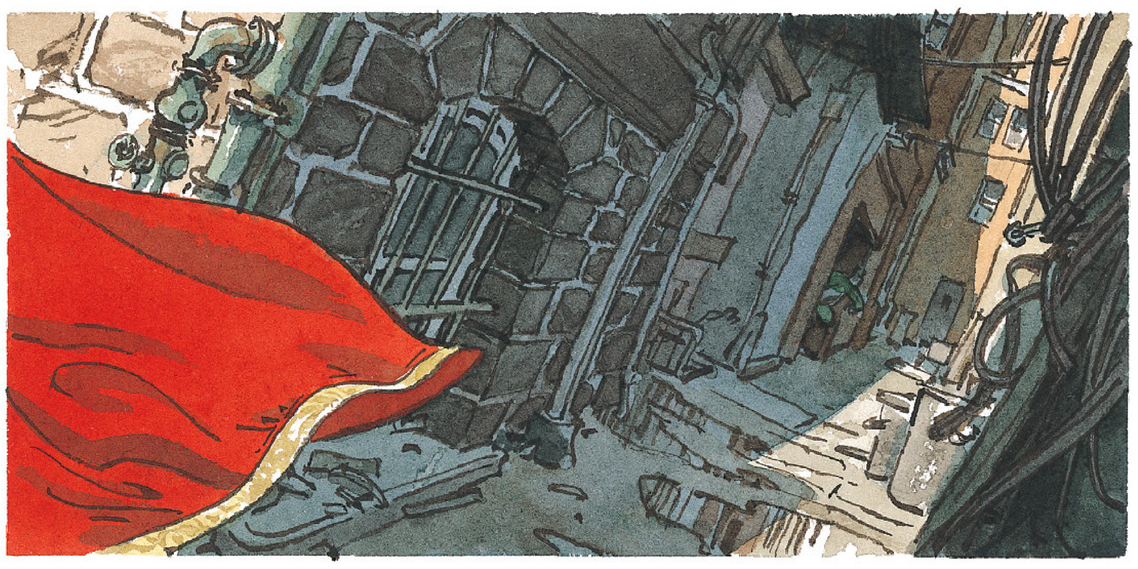

WELL! THAT'S A FISTFUL OF GOOD REASONS, YESSIR!

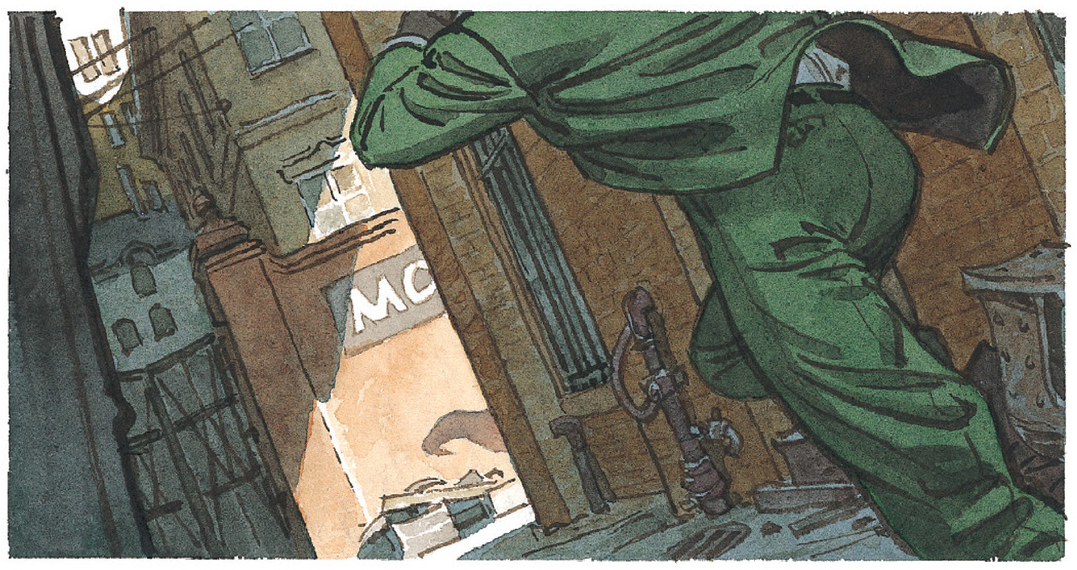

HEY, NICE DOIN' BUSINESS WITH YOU...

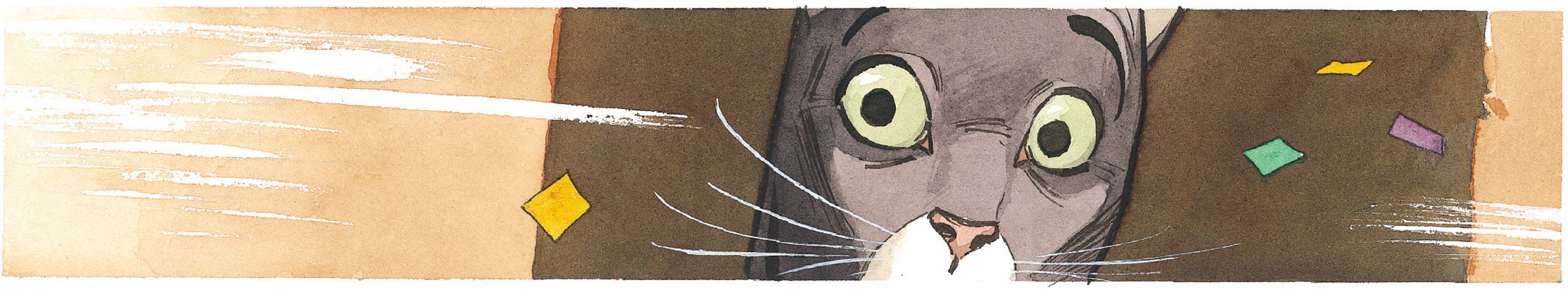
30

YOU COME BACK ANYTIME! LAISSEZ LES BONS TEMPS ROULER, MAN!

EBONY LOUNGE
ARTISTS' ENTRANCE
-PRIVATE-







31

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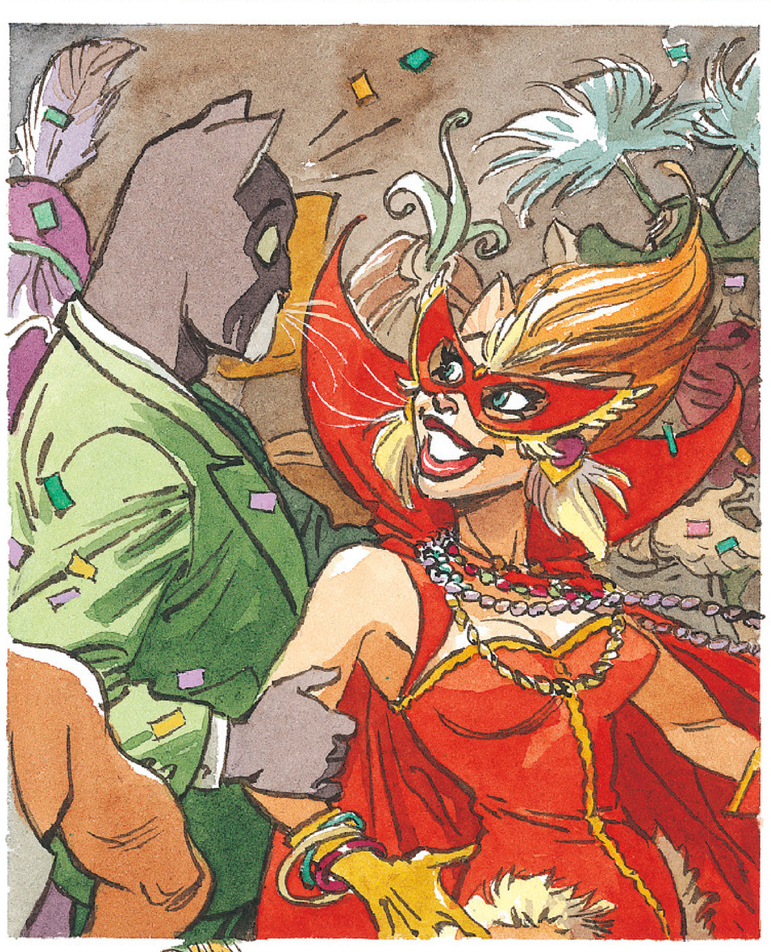


33

THIS MASQUERADE WAS BEGINNING TO MAKE SENSE, AND THE MASKS TO SLIP AWAY. THOMAS LACHAPELLE WAS MORE THAN JUST A JEALOUS SON. HE WAS A BROKEN MAN.

IN HIS DESPERATION, HE PROBABLY HOOKED UP WITH THE MADAME, TO FINISH HIS FATHER OFF QUICKLY.

NEXT ON HIS LIST WAS SEBASTIAN. AFRAID THAT FAUST'S FORTUNE WOULD GO TO THE SURROGATE SON...

...THOMAS DECIDED TO GET RID OF HIS "BROTHER" IN A DEVILISHLY SIMPLE WAY... BY GIVING HIM BAD DOPE.

FOR THE SAME REASON, HE'D MADE HIMSELF INDISPENSIBLE TO HANNAH, SO THAT HE'D BE THE FIRST TO SEE IF SEBASTIAN CAME BACK HOME. OR MAYBE IT WAS JUST HIS WAY OF GETTING REVENGE, OF TAKING WHAT SEBASTIAN LOVED MOST...

HE'D EVEN DECIDED TO GET RID OF ANYONE WHO KNEW HOW TO FIND SEBASTIAN, LIKE JUNIOR...

...OR MYSELF.

WELL, WELL! LIKE I ALWAYS SAY, THESE YANKEES CAN'T HOLD THEIR LIQUOR.

34

I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S WORSE, LEEMAN: THE DRUG THAT WAS SLIPPED IN MY BOURBON OR THE SMELL OF YOUR DISGUSTING CIGAR...

DON'T WORRY, PAL. AFTER AN INVIGORATING BATH YOU'LL FEEL JUST LIKE NEW...

HOLD IT, LEEMAN. LIKE YOU ALWAYS SAY, WE PROFESSIONALS SHOULD STICK TOGETHER...

AAARGH!!

THAT'S RIGHT, PAL. EXCEPT YOU KNOW THAT REAL PROFESSIONALS ALWAYS FINISH THE JOB.

BLAM BLAM BLAM

GRRRAAAH!

SPLAASHHH

BOM

BOM BOM BOM!

AH!!

BOM BOM

SEBASTIAN! WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON?!

...

SWINGIN

IS BOURBON

THE CROWD'S WAITING!

I'M COMIN'!

CLANK

I'M COMIN'!

AH!

38

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

KOF! KOF!

DO CATS *ANYWHERE* LIKE THE WATER...?

WELL, YOU SEEM TO HAVE A CURIOUS TENDENCY TO GET YOURSELF INTO IT...

?

DO WE KNOW EACH OTHER...?

IT'S POSSIBLE. AFTER ALL, WE'RE BOTH CATS...

...WE MUST HAVE CROSSED PATHS IN *ONE* OF OUR NINE LIVES.

PHEW... IT'S HOT! BOURBON MILKSHAKE, PLEASE!

DO I LOOK LIKE A MILK COW TO YOU?

UHH... NO. NO!

I'LL TAKE... WHATEVER YOU GIVE ME. PLEASE!

BOM!

THANKS...

PFFT... THE SAME THING HAPPENED TO ME!

THESE YOKELS DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT A COCKTAIL IS...

ALLOW ME TO JOIN YOU, MAM'SELLE?

ZIP!

HEE, HEE! "MAM'SELLE," HE SAYS... CALL ME ROSE...

ENCHANTÉ, ROSE! MY NAME IS...

...AHEM... =GULP= WEEKLY.

40

WELL, NOW... THAT'S CURIOUS! YOU HAVE THE SAME NAME AS THE WHAT'S NEWS JOURNALIST...

HEEEYY! THAT'S ME!

HEE, HEE, HEE... I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!

ME NEITHER!

YOU HEAR THE RUMOR, MAN? SEB FLETCHER'S TURNED UP, AND HE'S PLAYING TONIGHT AT THE WILD NOTE...

COOOL! ... I WOULDN'T MISS THAT FOR THE WORLD... LET'S GO!

I HAVE TO LEAVE!!

DEAR GOD IN HEAVEN, WHAT HAVE I DONE TO DESERVE THIS?

41

THE *WILD NOTE* IS PROUD TO WELCOME BACK SEBASTIAN "LITTLE HAND" FLETCHER, WHO WILL PERFORM HIS NEW SONG, "PIZEN BLUES."

THANK YOU, THANK YOU. THOUGH I AM ONLY 34, YOU CAN SEE THAT I LOOK MUCH OLDER.

I'M A JUNKIE, I DRINK LIKE A FISH, AND I RAN OUT ON MY PREGNANT WIFE...

HA!HA!HA!HA!HA!

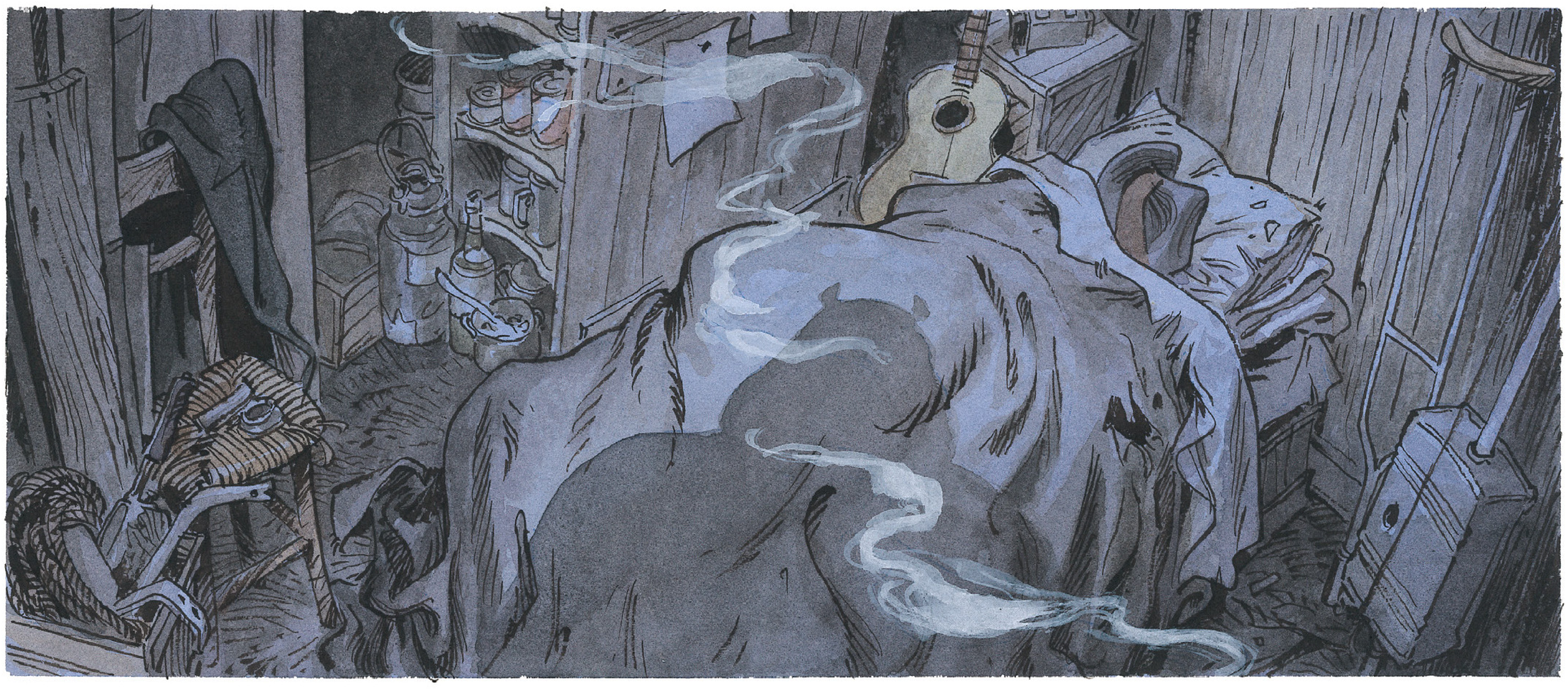
PAF!

BUT THAT'S NOTHIN' COMPARED TO THE WORST SIN I'VE EVER COMMITTED. THE SIN OF SILENCE... AND THAT'S WHAT THIS SONG IS ABOUT.

MOST OF YOU WON'T UNDERSTAND THE LYRICS. SO BEFORE I START, I'D LIKE TO GIVE YOU A LITTLE BACKGROUND...

... AND TELL YOU ABOUT THE SONGWRITER, AN HONEST MAN: BIG BILL LENOIR.

42



LIKE I ALWAYS SAY, ONLY FOLKS WITH A CLEAR CONSCIENCE CAN SLEEP SOUNDLY AT NIGHT. AM I RIGHT, LENOIR?
?
NOT LIKE THAT SCUMBAG LACHAPELLE. THAT FOOL THOUGHT HE COULD REHIRE ME AT TWICE THE PRICE, TO WASH HIS DIRTY LAUNDRY AND GET RID OF A TRAIL OF TROUBLESOME WITNESSES.

BUT THIS TIME HE'S GONE TOO FAR. THOSE LOUSY SECRETS ARE WORTH A LOT MORE... AT LEAST THAT'S WHAT YOUR FRIEND JUNIOR TOLD ME JUST BEFORE HE RUSHED OUT TO GET SOME AIR...

SO BE A NICE BOY AND GIVE ME THE GOODS ON "LIFE EVERLASTING"!

YOU'RE AN ASSHOLE, LEEMAN.
!!!

YOU?!

THE GOODS... ARE THE WITNESSES.

SON OF A BITCH!

AARGH!

IN THIS LINE OF WORK, LOGIC IS FAR MORE USEFUL THAN ANY FIREARM.

THE NEXT PERSON ON THE LIST TO BE ELIMINATED WAS LENOIR...

CKRAASH!

AAH!

GRRAAH!

THUMP!!

...FORTUNATELY, I GOT THERE IN TIME...

IDIOT... WE COULD HAVE MADE A KILLING TOGETHER...

...BUT YOU HAD TO GO AND MAKE THIS PERSONAL!

TCHUNK!

AAARGH!

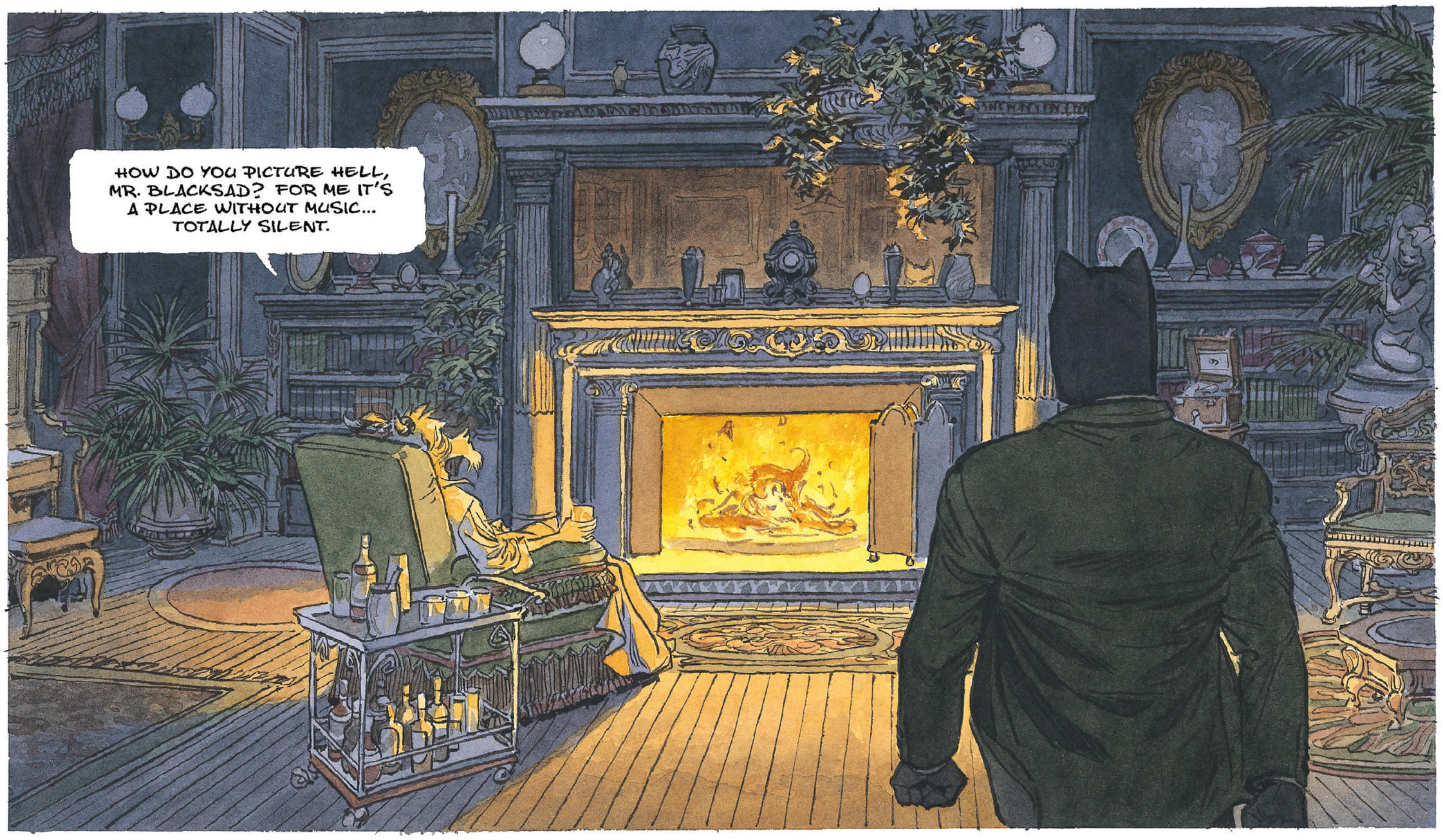
I OWE YOU ONE, PAL.

NOW, TELL ME THE STORY OF DUPRÉ AND THE "PIZEN BLUES"...

LIFE EVERLASTING
A CHEST RUB MADE BY
DR. DUPRE
JUST PUT IT UN
PILLOW OR SMOKE
AN INHALANT TO
ASTHMA
INFLUENZA

45

Lachapelle
BIG BAND


HOW DO YOU PICTURE HELL, MR. BLACKSAD? FOR ME IT'S A PLACE WITHOUT MUSIC... TOTALLY SILENT.

THEN LET'S TALK, FAUST. IT'S TIME TO DIG UP THE STORY OF JOACHIM, HARPER, LENOIR, AND SEBASTIAN...

...FOUR CRIPPLED MUSICIANS WHO SHARED A TERRIBLE SECRET. A SECRET THAT GOES BACK SEVERAL DECADES, TO THE SMALL TOWN OF CALDONIA.
STUPID, MEDDLING CAT. YOUR JOB WAS TO FIND SEBASTIAN, CASH YOUR CHECK, AND GET LOST.

AT THIS POINT IN YOUR LIFE YOU SHOULD HAVE LEARNED THAT WORK AND MONEY AREN'T EVERYTHING...

46

"BACK TO CALDONIA, A TOWN SUDDENLY HIT BY A STRANGE PLAGUE, RESULTING IN DOZENS OF DEATHS, MISCARRIAGES...

"...AND BIRTH DEFECTS.

LIFE EVERLASTING A CHEST RUB MADE BY DR. DUPRÉ Just put it into a pillow or smoke as an inhalant to treat ASTHMA AND INFLUENZA

DR DUPRÉ

"HE HAD CONTACTS, AND IT WAS EASY FOR HIM TO CONVINCE A CORRUPT JUDGE TO TURN A DEAF EAR TO AN ILLITERATE, IMPOVERISHED POPULATION."

"THE CAUSE OF THIS CURSE WAS A PRODUCT THAT SEEMED HARMLESS, BUT WHICH PROVED LETHAL. A FLU MEDICINE CALLED 'LIFE EVERLASTING,' MARKETED BY A SCOUNDREL NAMED DUPRÉ.

...THE SURVIVORS OF THAT TRAGEDY WENT THEIR SEPARATE WAYS AND KEPT QUIET, AFRAID OF WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN IF THEY BROKE THEIR SILENCE.

ALMOST ALL THEIR CHILDREN WERE BORN WITH PHYSICAL DEFORMITIES, NEVER KNOWIN' WHY. FINALLY, THE WHOLE STORY JUST SORTA FADED INTO THE PAST...

"THE FOUR FRIENDS STAYED TOGETHER FOR A WHILE AND STARTED A STREET BAND, BUT THAT FELL APART WHEN JOACHIM, THE TRUMPET PLAYER, WAS DRAFTED, WITH NO ONE TO TAKE HIS PLACE.

"THE YEARS WENT BY...

"DUPRÉ CHANGED HIS NAME AND BEGAN A CAREER AS A SECOND-RATE BANDLEADER. AFTER THAT FELL APART, HE MOVED TO NEW ORLEANS AND STARTED A SUCCESSFUL RECORD LABEL."

47

FATE LED HIM TO HOOK BACK UP WITH HIS PAST. FIRST CAME JUNIOR HARPER. AN EXCELLENT MUSICIAN, BUT HIS RECORDS WERE NEVER BIG SELLERS.

THEN CAME SEBASTIAN. HE HAD A TALENT SO BRIGHT THAT IT OUTSHONE THE SUN.

AFTER ONLY TWO ALBUMS, HE BECAME LACHAPELLE RECORDS' STAR... AND A HOUSEHOLD NAME IN JAZZ CIRCLES.

"THE PROBLEM STARTED WHEN LENOIR SHOWED UP. HE RAN INTO JOACHIM AFTER THE WAR.

"JOACHIM DIED SOON AFTER. LEGEND HAS IT THAT HE PLAYED THE TRUMPET SO HARD, IT CAUSED HIS LUNGS TO BURST. BUT ACTUALLY THE POISON HAD JUST MANIFESTED ITSELF LATE, IN THE FORM OF LUNG DISEASE.

"BEFORE HE DIED, HE TOLD LENOIR THE TRUTH ABOUT THE POISONING, WHICH HE'D LEARNED FROM AN ARMY BUDDY WHO TURNED OUT TO BE ONE OF THE OLD SURVIVORS FROM CALDONIA."

"...BUT A COUPLE OF WELL-KNOWN MUSICIANS MIGHT HAVE A BETTER SHOT. HE TRIED TO CONVINCE US TO EXPOSE FAUST TOGETHER. JUNIOR, WHO BLAMED FAUST FOR HIS FAILED CAREER, STARTED BLACKMAILIN' HIM.

LENOIR KNEW THAT NOBODY WOULD PAY ATTENTION TO A CRIPPLED BLACK TRAMP...

48

"BUT FAUST NIPPED THAT IN THE BUD, THANKS TO HIS CONTACTS.

"I WAS AFRAID. I JUST LOOKED THE OTHER WAY. I DIDN'T WANT TO LOSE EVERYTHING I'D WORKED FOR... EVEN IF IT WAS BUILT ON THE DEAD BODIES OF MY PEOPLE...

"I TRIED TO DISAPPEAR, TO GET AWAY, TO FORGET, ONLY TO REALIZE THAT YOU CAN PUT YOUR CONSCIENCE TO SLEEP, BUT YOU CAN'T KILL IT..."

Wild Note

...AND THAT'S WHAT THIS SONG IS ABOUT. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, FROM BIG BILL LENOIR AND SEBASTIAN FLETCHER: "PIZEN BLUES."

"HOW CAN SOMEONE EATEN UP BY CANCER TREAT OTHER PEOPLE'S LIVES SO CHEAPLY? EVEN ON YOUR DEATHBED, CAN'T YOU SUMMON UP A LITTLE COMPASSION, FAUST?"

"I DON'T HAVE CANCER, BLACKSAD. I HAVE A RARE GENETIC DISORDER. THE IRONY OF FATE... MY BLOOD IS POISONED, ROTTEN, LIKE THAT OF MY FATHER, AND MY FATHER'S FATHER. AND PROBABLY LIKE THE BLOOD OF MY SON, THOMAS. I'VE SPENT A FORTUNE TRYING TO FIND A CURE..."

"THAT'S WHY YOU DIDN'T WANT THE 'LIFE EVERLASTING' CASE REOPENED. IF YOU WERE FOUND GUILTY, THE LAWSUITS WOULD RUIN YOU. WELL, IT SEEMS YOUR TIME'S RUN OUT."

49

NO, YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND... THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH ME. I DON'T WANT TO LEAVE THOMAS WITH THIS SAD INHERITANCE... OF PHYSICAL AND FINANCIAL RUIN.

ISN'T IT A LITTLE LATE TO START WORRYING ABOUT YOUR SON?

IF THE RESEARCH IS SUCCESSFUL, THOMAS CAN SURVIVE AND HAVE HEALTHY CHILDREN. HE'S MY ONLY CHANCE TO CONTINUE THE LINEAGE... MY LEGACY.

A LEGACY HANDED DOWN UNDER A FAKE NAME AND STAINED WITH INNOCENT BLOOD? I HOPE THAT THOMAS HAS OTHER PLANS FOR HIS FUTURE...

JOHN! I FOUND HIM, AT THE WILD NOTE...!

SUMMERTIME, AND THE LIVIN' IS EASY

FISH ARE JUMPIN' AND THE COTTON IS HIGH

YOUR DADDY'S RICH AND YOUR MAMMA'S GOOD LOOKIN'

SO HUSH LITTLE BABY

DON'T YOU CRY

ONE OF THESE MORNINGS YOU'RE GONNA RISE UP SINGING

PO'BOY

GUMBO PALACE

WILD NOTE

Root beer

CLUB

51

THEN YOU'LL SPREAD YOUR WINGS AND YOU'LL TAKE TO THE SKY

WHITE
COLORED
♪ BUT TILL THAT MORNIN' ♩
♩ THERE AIN'T NOTHIN' CAN HARM YOU ♩

WITH MOMMY... ♩
♪♩ 'N' DADDY...
STANDIN' BY... ♫

52

IT'S OVER. THEY'RE COMING BACK FROM THE CEMETERY.

I'M AFRAID HE'LL NEED IT MORE THAN I WILL...

SIGH!

ARE YOU STILL SULKING OVER THAT "ROSE"? I THINK SHE WAS A HALLUCINATION. IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE IN SUCH A PERFECT GIRL...

JUST AS HARD TO BELIEVE YOU GAVE THE MONEY BACK TO THAT THOMAS...!

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? HE'S GOING TO INHERIT A HUGE FORTUNE!

IT'S A LONG STORY... LET'S JUST SAY HIS LIFE'S IN DANGER AND HE'S GOING TO NEED ALL THE HELP HE CAN GET...

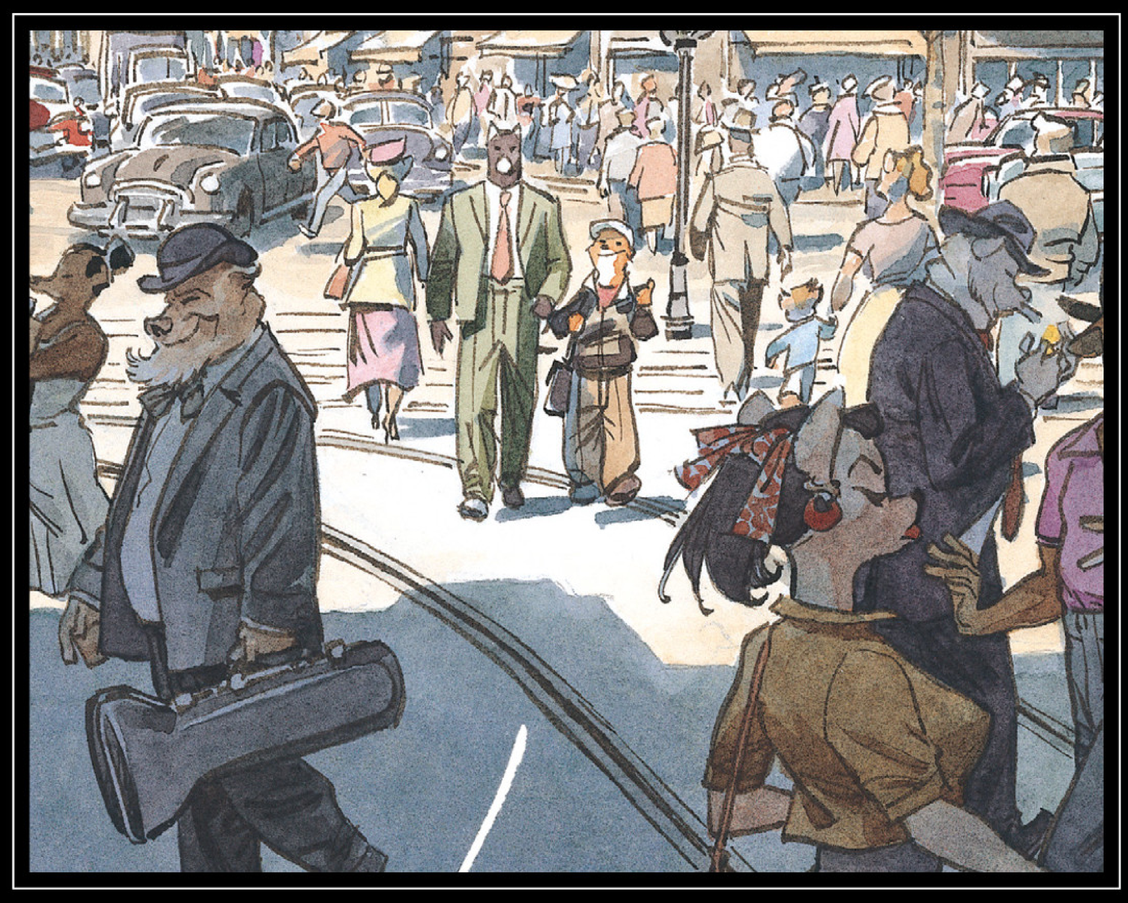
HA! LOOK WHO'S TALKING! IN JUST ONE NIGHT YOU WERE ALMOST DROWNED, THEN STRANGLED...

IT'S NOT THE SAME, WEEK. IT'S NOT THE SAME...

SAYS THE TOUGH GUY! YOU'D THINK YOU HAD A GUARDIAN ANGEL...

END
OF EPISODE

JUAN DÍAZ CANALES & JUANJO GUARNIDO
2010



THE WATERCOLOR STORY

by

Juanjo Guarnido

Translation by Bart Beaty

Not unexpectedly, I find myself called upon once again to indulge in the task of explaining the process that I employ to create the color in *Blacksad* . . . I took a hiatus with *Sorcelleries*—the first volume of which was my attempt to develop another technique, with mixed albeit often enjoyable results—and my graphic intentions, there, were different enough . . .

But my taste for watercolor returned quickly and forcefully . . . amplified by surprising findings that constitute a genuine rediscovery of this medium which has given me so many headaches over the past dozen years. From the very first pages of this fourth *Blacksad* graphic album, I felt the need to change my approach. This ultimately affected not only my working methods, but the entire range of materials that I use. Nonetheless, I never for a second questioned my longstanding process of using small-scale color sketches.

At the start of the series it had seemed clear to me that a satiny paper was the most appropriate for extremely fine inked line work. It is true, however, that I used a pen for the inks up to the middle of the second book, and did not make the definitive switch to a brush until after some bitter setbacks with that metallic tool. In both cases, I remained under the false impression that even a fine-grained paper would hinder a clean and clear line. For a long time, on other projects (and even during my work at art school), I had the opportunity to observe that the ideal surface for watercolor is grained paper. Specifically, a certain paper grain. It isn't just that the texture is more noticeable or beautiful in the final result, but that the watercolor truly "moves" better on paper that "drinks" it and dries it at just the right speed. It remains maneuverable, ductile, and "docile" for the few seconds that are needed to handle it properly. It provides a result that is fresher, more even, and more pleasing to the eye than satiny paper, which tends to produce effects that are irregular, unattractive, and, above all, uncontrollable.

I can no longer say with any certainty whether the following occurred at the same time or just after I decided to change paper and perform my first tests on the new sheets, but I had a surprising conversation with my friend Anuca (Ana Miralles, if you please), who found herself in exactly the same situation: she was fed up with satiny paper! What deception to have believed it was impossible to produce a beautiful line on anything but a smooth surface! What joy to be able to work on a page where the "drop" of the watercolor seems for once to obey! Ah, the "drop" of watercolor . . . this concept was the real discovery; I will return to it in time! In short, it was reassuring to note that even master artists like Ana were able to question themselves and to keep making technical discoveries, even with many years of work behind them. As a result, you feel less like you're floundering . . .

Other steps forward have included changes in tools and materials. Goodbye to the inconvenient cups in which the brush is stirred for three minutes in order to produce a pathetic quantity of color, and hello to watercolor in tubes (large tubes are my preference—thank you, Internet, for making art supplies available internationally)! A large ceramic palette became the perfect surface for mixing, and my stock of eroded brushes was left to rot. There is nothing like a well-preserved brush tip, even if it is not actually new, for "spreading the drop" of watercolor on paper. Ah! The concept of the "drop" . . . I'm getting to it, I'm getting to it . . .

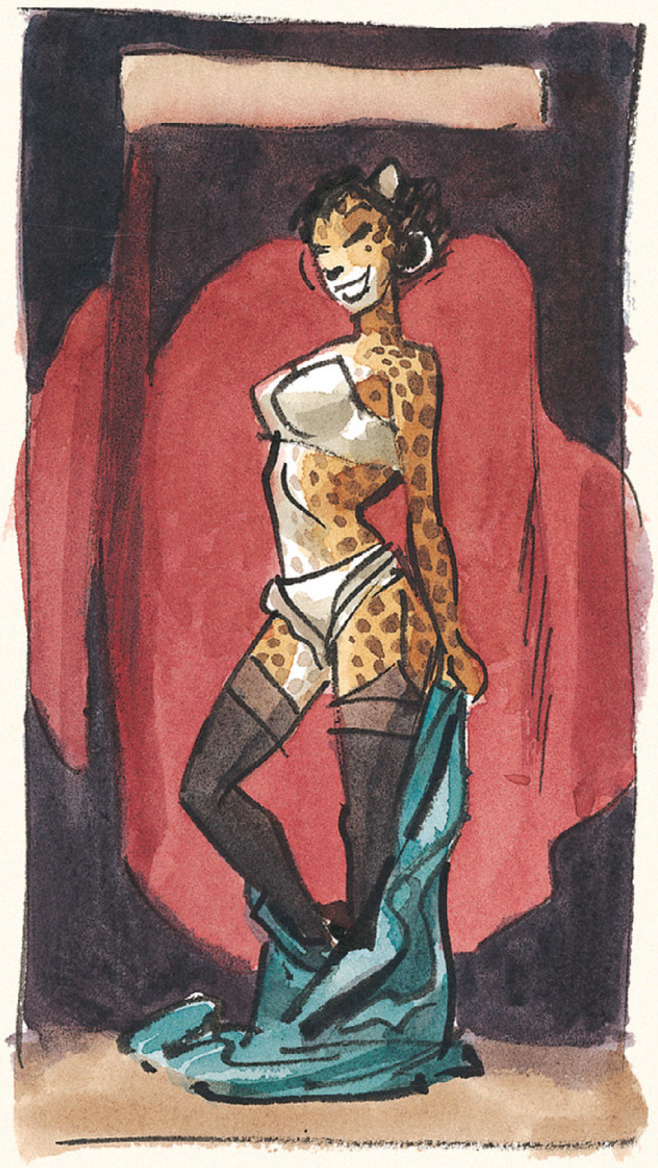
The pleasure of working in watercolor came to me all at once, while previously (even if I have tended at times, I know, to enjoy the results) it more closely resembled a struggle than anything else (though I would not call it a chore). The proof: I have always been hesitant to advise others to adopt this technique!

Two preliminary studies, along with the finished panel.

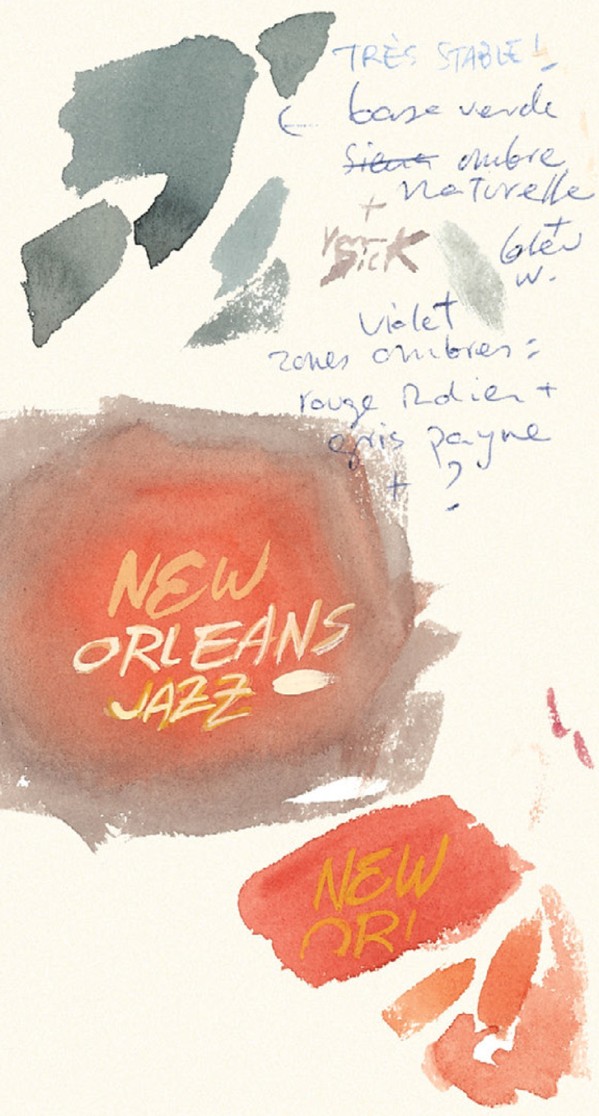
In order to generate an exact reference at the practice stage, I use the same paper as often as possible for my color sketches as for the finished art. But this wasn't necessarily the case with *all* the preliminary sketches reproduced here, due to some experimentation on my part at the start of this book.

Although from time to time I had been able to keep practicing with watercolor on various illustrations, I was nonetheless returning to the medium after a long absence. I confess I approached these first sketches with as much stress as fun! I can't deny it . . . A shadowy and mysterious vibe was obviously called for in this opening sequence . . . What the above drawings show is that after a first attempt turned out too bright, I moved in a more radical direction, which served as the basis for the "death mask" (visible on page 101 of this edition), and incorporated without hesitation the reds and other tones suggestive of fire . . .

The sequence in the strip joint presented a number of lighting problems. Clearly, the first of these was lighting the "leopardess" and the color of her gown against the pattern of her skin. Because it is the complement of her orange fur, the blue that I tried on this sketch would have made for a stark contrast, but it ultimately seemed too showy. I kept it for the character's gloves, but I painted the dress red. The second problem was the reverse shot, where we finally see the room (with Blacksad and Weekly). As you can see on the sketches, I hesitated about using what animators call a "rim light" in order to separate the foreground figure from the background. Naturally, the room had to be very dark, while still allowing the characters to be visible and recognizable. The stripper's spotted fur was itself the subject of a number of trials.



The street scene outside the bar was relatively easy to do and required only one sketch—even though it was necessary to continue experimenting with the neon-lit exteriors. I also created swatches of color on the side, which served as a base and which proved stable when mixed. I frequently do this: keep isolated swatches of my base color as samples of the exact color to be reproduced later.



The sequence in the prison was very delicate and difficult to resolve. As attentive readers of *A Silent Hell* will note, the plot unfolds over the course of a single night. On the other hand, every scene set during the day is a flashback that provides background on events that have happened or that are going to happen, a narrative device that my dear friend and collaborator Juan Díaz Canales pulls off with gusto, bravely abandoning contrived captions like "two days earlier" or "a week before." Of course, this left me in a pickle: I had to clearly establish that we were in the middle of a flashback through the use of light and color. I'd like to believe that our formidable teamwork was once again up to the challenge . . .

Convinced, as I am, that the sense of bright light is created more by way of contrast than by the clarity of the chosen colors, I attempted in my sketching—which always continues right up to the last scene of the book—to find the best method to re-create the magnificent light of Louisiana. A little humility at the right time would have allowed me to see that this is an impossible task . . . Later, I came to understand that too much heaviness in the shadows is not a good thing, as it can deaden the luminosity of the entire piece. Yet, at the time, I was torn between sketches that aspired to Gustave Courbet's "luminous shadow" and others whose shaded areas were too dark. Ultimately, I arrived at a compromise that balances the light's reflection on the ground, in the brightly lit areas as well as in the shadows cast by the trees. The blue uniforms worn by the prisoners share in the ambient golden tones, thanks to their greenish hue.

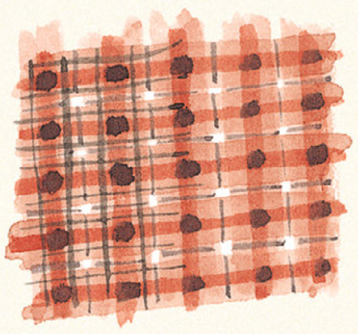
In the sketch on the following page—more successful than the one above, which is too dark—I wanted to convey the general brightness under the tree by depicting the white shirts of the gorilla and the panther as a relatively luminous ocher in the shade, and by painting their black fur in tones of lighter brown. Situated between these figures, Weekly and Faust are bathed in direct sunlight.

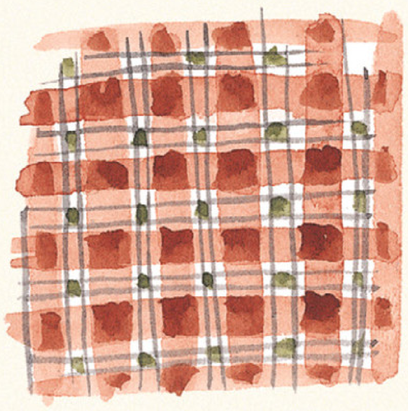
Aside from the issue of strong daylight rays streaming in through Faust's bay window, the brightness of his office presented an even more complicated problem: its multiplicity of light sources. This type of problem seems to me one of the most hopeless brainteasers that an artist can face. In addition to the primary light source, which logically determines the color balance of the objects it illuminates, a different-colored light source—or a multiplicity thereof—has to be managed at the same time. Roughly speaking, in a part of the large shaded area that is not lit by the broad beam of daylight, and thus within that area's range, it was necessary to create colors that would correspond both to the shadows *and* to the light generated by the second source, namely the candles. What follows is a relatively simple solution for this kind of problem . . .

In this specific example, daylight is created, as is often the case in *Blacksad*, by using the whiteness of the paper. As the large number of sketches produced for this scene demonstrates, I was torn between treating the half-light of the room's interior with cold tones or with warm ones.

After six attempts which, as often happens, produced very similar results, I came back to the second sketch: the choice of a generally golden atmosphere simply seemed more harmonious in regard to the candles, with their reddish color and yellow flames.

Thus, *exeunt* the trials with greenish tones in favor of a more radical lighting of the characters, notably Blacksad. The darkening of elements in the foreground is a ploy typical of animation art, where overlays are used to create depth.





The crowd scene outside the record store marks an important turning point in the story. It had become a particularly important moment in the book, especially after my trip to New Orleans: I knew that in this sequence I would do anything to capture, as faithfully as possible, the intersection of Canal Street, Bourbon, and Carondelet as it existed during the early fifties. Following an exhaustive study of existing records, I think that despite the few liberties I allowed myself to take—including rails for a streetcar (named Desire) running down Bourbon Street, even though that service stopped at the end of the forties, and the presence of palm trees along Canal, though they weren't planted until 1958—someone who had known the town during this charming period would still be fooled by the job.

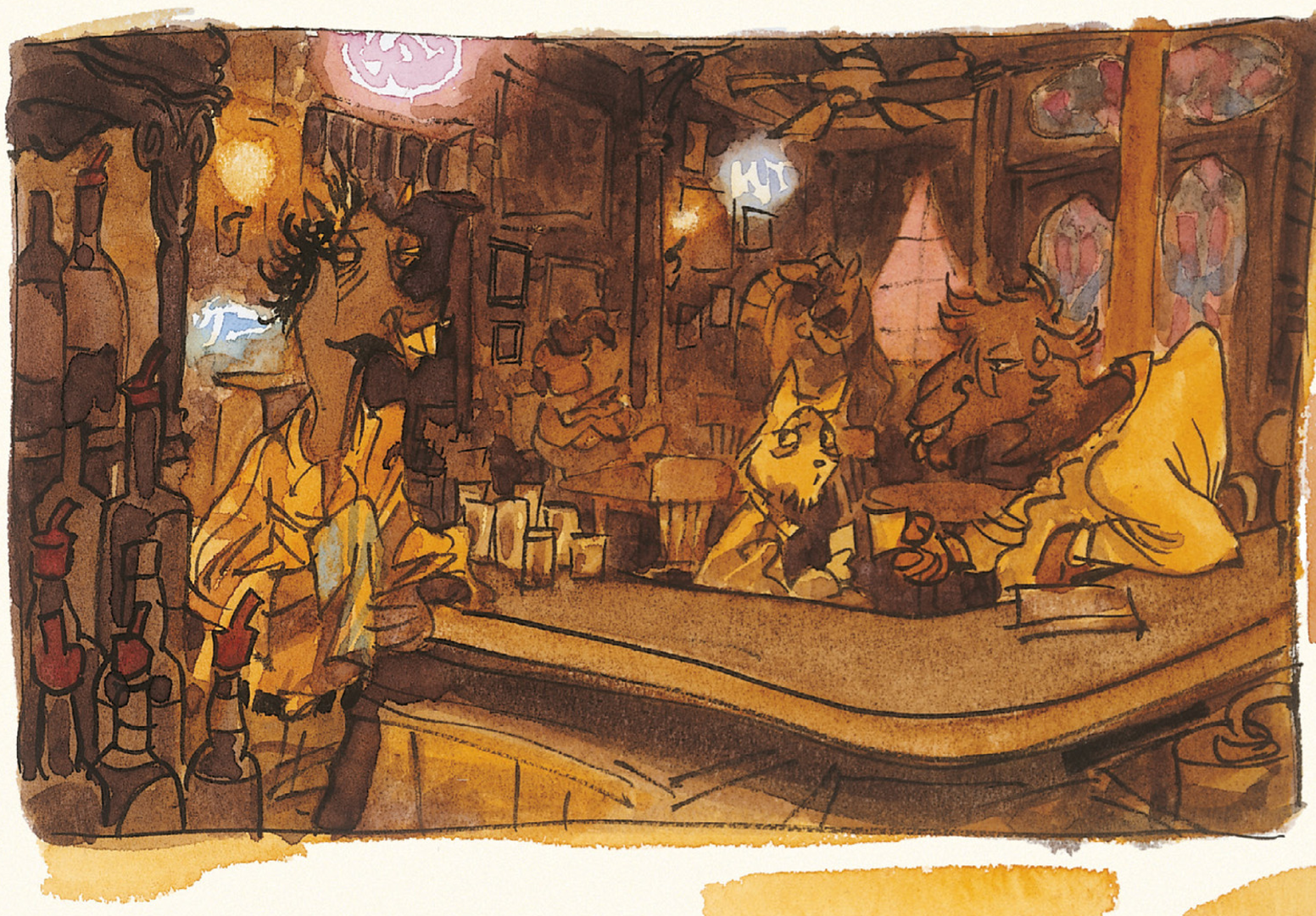
This isn't my purpose here, but I'd like to elaborate on some of the details that went into the composition of this scene: its reconstruction—based on a photo that I took myself (similar to many others that can be found in the archives)—was arrived at by superimposing various images of different sizes, with a reality-defying focal length that corresponds to a view too deep into Bourbon Street for the dimensions of the image. Uh . . . I hope that budding photographers, at least, understand what I'm talking about . . . Then there's the olive green tram (which you can still ride today), turning at Carondelet towards St. Charles Avenue "just one block down"; the stores with their period-style signs; the 1948 Gus Mayer Building, which I transformed into the headquarters of Lachapelle Records; the Mardi Gras decorations on the posts; the Creole melting pot, so typical of New Orleans, parading down the avenue: musicians, gay men out of the closet, elderly matrons, improbable couples, and the probing "blue and yellow" gaze of the gigantic Ignatius J. Reilly, the eccentric protagonist of John Kennedy Toole's *A Confederacy of Dunces*, taking it all in . . .

From the very first color sketch (which, because it was such an important scene, I made as large as the A4 size* of the pencil roughs that preceded it, in order to trace the pencil line onto it), the problem of daytime lighting was solved by choosing a single tone for shading through the entire scene: a mixture of Winsor blue and clay, which approximated Payne's gray but without its stability problems. (As with the majority of colors made from mineral pigments, Payne's gray is fragile and tends to be swept away by the paint that comes after it, an effect that great watercolor artists like Loïc Jouannigot know how to use . . . but that I haven't figured out!) The decision to place the foreground group of characters in shadow allowed me to create the illusion of depth characteristic of animation overlays, as discussed previously, and also to achieve some interesting silhouettes . . .

** Editor's note: A4 is an international paper size slightly larger than the standard US letter size of 8½ x 11 inches.*

RECORDS
STEIN'S

What a joy and what a find, the Leeman character! Naturally, the lighting of the sequence in which he shows up remained the same as that of the establishing shot on the previous page. My sketches focused instead on his clothes. The light-colored suit seemed appropriate for a southern gentleman. The dark three-piece suit with its 1930s-style pinstripes gave him a distinguished demeanor, and his skin coloring went well with it. I preferred the latter option, but the writer leaned *a priori* towards the light suit that he had described in the script. I sent him the mockup with the two choices, and his response was truly interesting: the light suit gave Leeman the air of a Mafioso, while, on the other hand, the pinstripes "improved" him, making him more sympathetic (the word used by Juan was *bonachón*, which falls somewhere between *nice* and *simpleminded*). Clearly, playing with the ambiguity of the character was the right choice; so, we went with the dark suit. The pinstripes were done on the computer . . .



This sequence came up at a time when I was testing various kinds of paper—which gave a distinct texture to the two finished pages—but the sketches were produced on a different paper stock. Of course, the locale lent itself to the dim lighting characteristic of contraband activity, even if a few neon beer signs were still necessary. Finally, between the two choices—one somewhat more yellow and softly lit, and the other grayer and more plainly somber—I opted for a compromise.

The sketch of the action scene allowed me to consider how to integrate Blacksad's green clothes into the palette. Contrary to what appears here, for the final version the horse was reworked in light against a dark background.

The finished panel of Hannah awaiting the arrival of the streetcar generally seemed to go over well, yet this is a case where I prefer the sketch to the finished product. The watercolor seems lighter to me and more transparent, without adversely affecting the scene's nighttime aspect.

Depth, in drawing, is frequently a question of lighting, of superimposing well-lit elements on those that are darker, and vice versa. In these two sketches I was searching to create this depth, this "hollow"—as Alberto Ortiz, a fabulous painter and my former colleague at Granada's School of Fine Arts, has termed it—between the interior space of the car and the night outside. I was not convinced by the first option, with a heavy darkness outside the tram windows, and I attempted a second sketch in which the exterior was lighter against the frame of the streetcar and its window shades, which I purposely darkened here, rendering the depth more convincing and incorporating the whole in a more harmonious manner in the overall color scheme. On the basis of the palette determined by this study, the blue of Sebastian's shirt effectively attracts the eye.

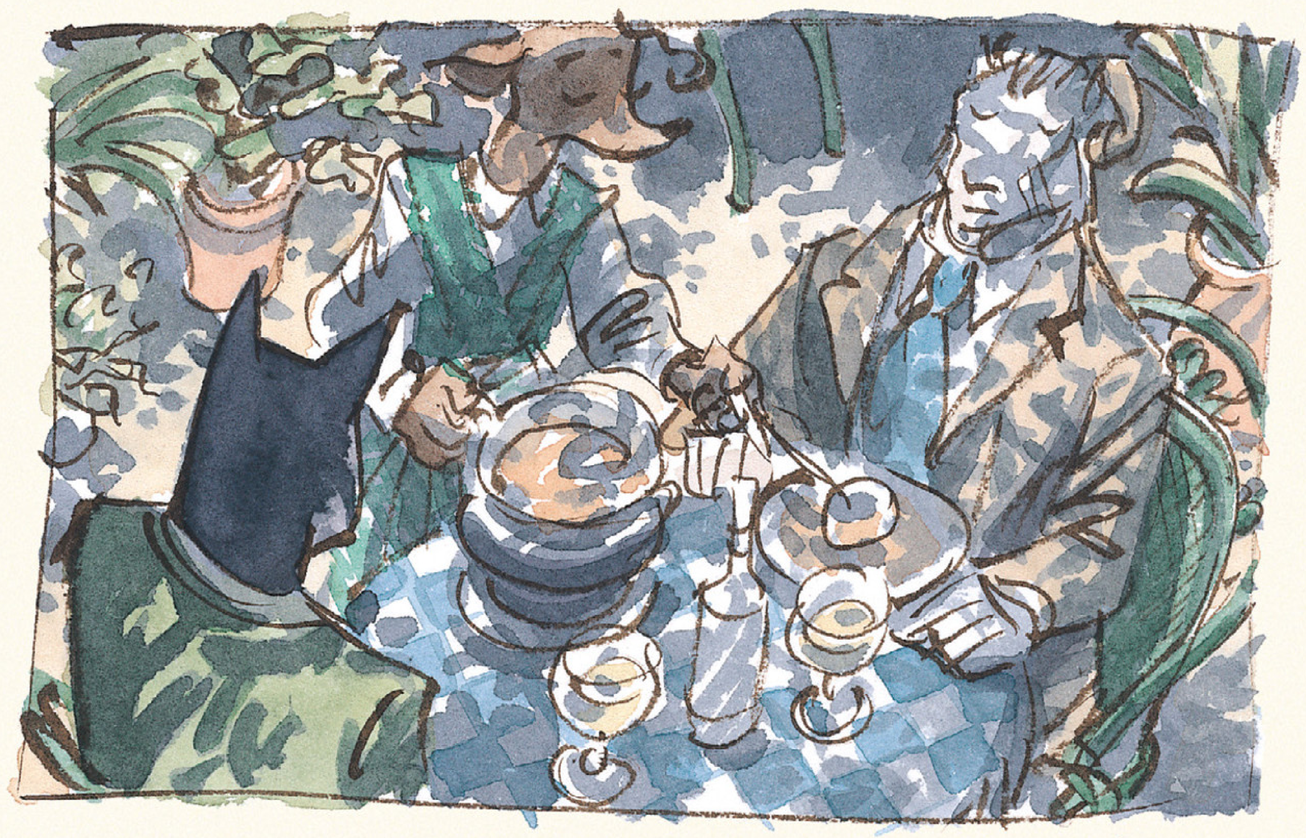
The image above is another of the sketches that I prefer to the final version of the panel, for the same reasons I spoke of earlier: because its transparency succeeds in resisting the heaviness of the dark palette. For the childbirth scene, the fact that Hannah has not lit the lamp in her room allowed me to present the moment in almost complete darkness by way of a sepia palette, and to suggest the moonlight through violet-gray reflections. This darkness seems to accentuate the vulnerability of the young woman who finds herself abandoned at such a moment . . .

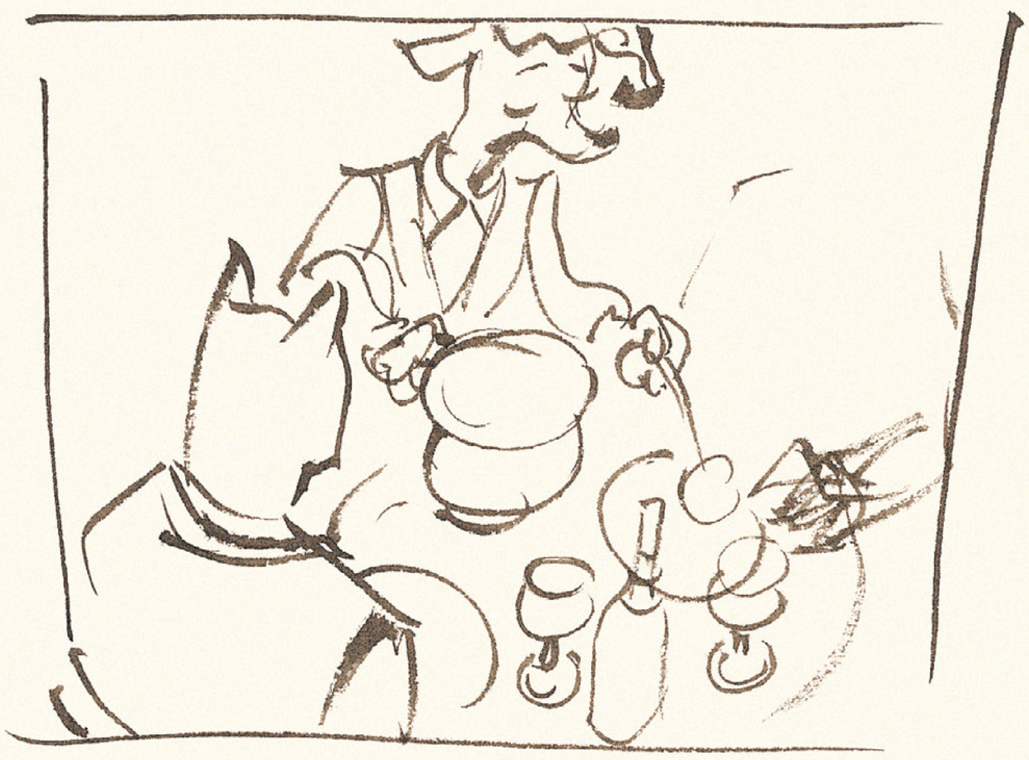
The two sketches for the panel in which Thomas appears in the doorway explore different approaches to the meager amount of lighting: the lower one progresses to a faded sepia for lighting the white objects; the upper one, which I used, allows the clear gray of the moonlight to enter the room and accentuate the contrasts. Anecdotally, the reminder at the corner of the sketch notes: "Very solid sepia base! Second layer Van Dyke." Translation: a sepia base resists being swept away by overlaid color. In order to obtain the final tone, it is necessary to add a layer of Van Dyke brown . . .

The arrival of Thomas allows us to move into flashback mode, and we find Blacksad in Russell's record store. Such an atmosphere necessarily lends itself to a wide range of color, much as I hate that . . . it is always more profitable and more visually pleasing to work within the reassuring framework of a limited palette, and it is very uncomfortable to try to manage a profusion of colors while integrating them at the same time. The Mardi Gras aesthetic was similarly painful to handle; we'll get to that . . . For this setting, in order to lend a degree of homogeneity to the palette, I privileged the red elements. I based this on photos of real record shops from the period, and even from the sixties, presaging that decade's psychedelic spirit.

With the return to the sun-drenched street, rendering the daylight once again became the primary color concern—this time with the brightly decorated streets of the French Quarter ("le Vieux Carré") lending their contribution. Right from my first sketches, I began to suspect that shadows projected onto surfaces of vivid color, and especially warm color, would need a lesser amount of blue—which had become the general color for shaded areas—and that I should strive to intensify the colors without darkening them (or "bluing" them), in order to best approach Courbet's idea of the luminous shadow and to better transmit the desired sense of clarity . . . Ditto for the yellows and oranges of the rodent urchins who populate the scene . . . And then there's the character of Lenoir, with his dark colors, who needs to remain the center of attention at every moment.

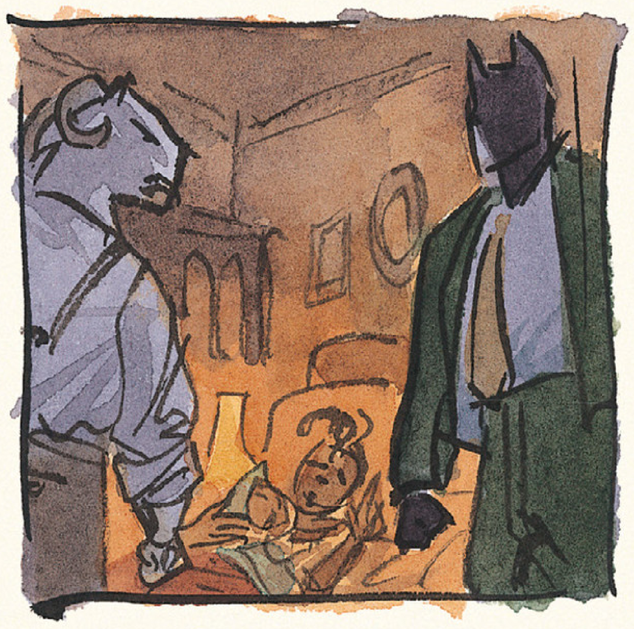
Nothing in the pencils of this sequence would suggest my final approach to the lighting, but that doesn't take into account my insurmountable tendency to complicate my life . . . While the finished pages are pretty (despite a technical snag that almost gave me apoplexy), I must confess a weakness for this little color sketch. As on the final art, the shading here is done almost systematically in blue. Although on the final I pushed a bit too far the logic of "contrast making for powerful lighting effects," here the lightness of the piece gives an overall impression of clarity. The ideal would have been a compromise between the two. But this was difficult enough to manage . . . I dare not even dream of the words "to master" . . . The red motifs on both the server's apron and the tablecloth were ultimately added to the final pages, enriching the palette with a warmer composition.





The panel with the jazz band rehearsing at the Wild Note began with the idea of a well-lit foreground strongly contrasting with the background, where Sebastian and Carl are speaking in an empty and dimly lit room. Sebastian's blue shirt would be easily identifiable in this setting, in addition to the fact that it would be deliberately treated so as not to blend with the palette or the lighting. I use the same process for this element every time, and the choice of color is clearly neither gratuitous nor trivial . . . Depth is created by the strong differentiation between the lighting of the image's two planes, but my curiosity was piqued by the possibility of discovering whether a more daring approach to the lighting of the musicians mightn't make the scene more attractive. But I was scared to screw up my little sketch, so I opted to do the mockup on my computer: I scanned the sketch and applied a layer of blue. The result was convincing, and the final page was produced similarly, except for the fact that the blue layer is a real coating of watercolor, not a virtual one . . .

The following sequence plays out at night in the interior of Hannah's room, weakly lit by a bedside lamp. This meager light source allowed me to establish an area of warm color around the figures of the mother and her newborn, fading as we move to the background, which is plunged in the shadow of cooler colors, receiving only a hint of the light implied by the pale ocher tones. Blacksad and Thomas move through this area until the end of the sequence when, at Hannah's request, a now more subdued Blacksad approaches her side, entering into the lamp's golden halo. I wasn't looking for the symbolic aspect . . . but it was welcome.



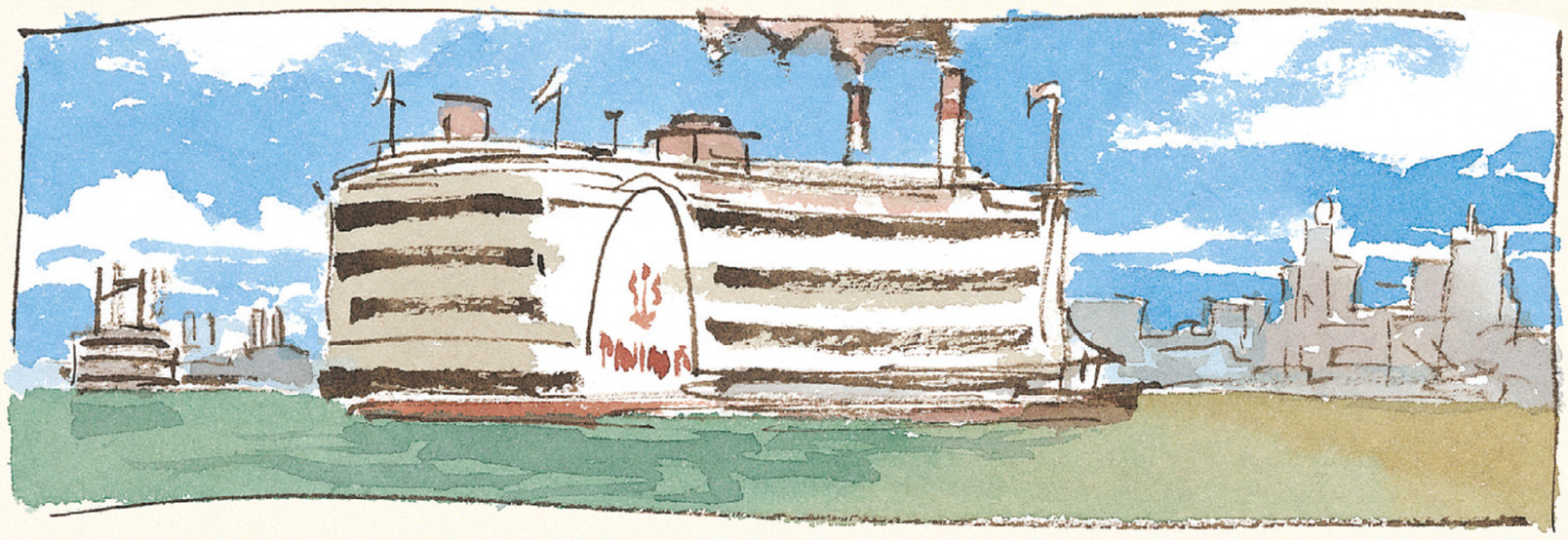
This small sketch of Thomas did not need to be completed since it served as a study of the play of shadow. In animation this is called a "tonal study."

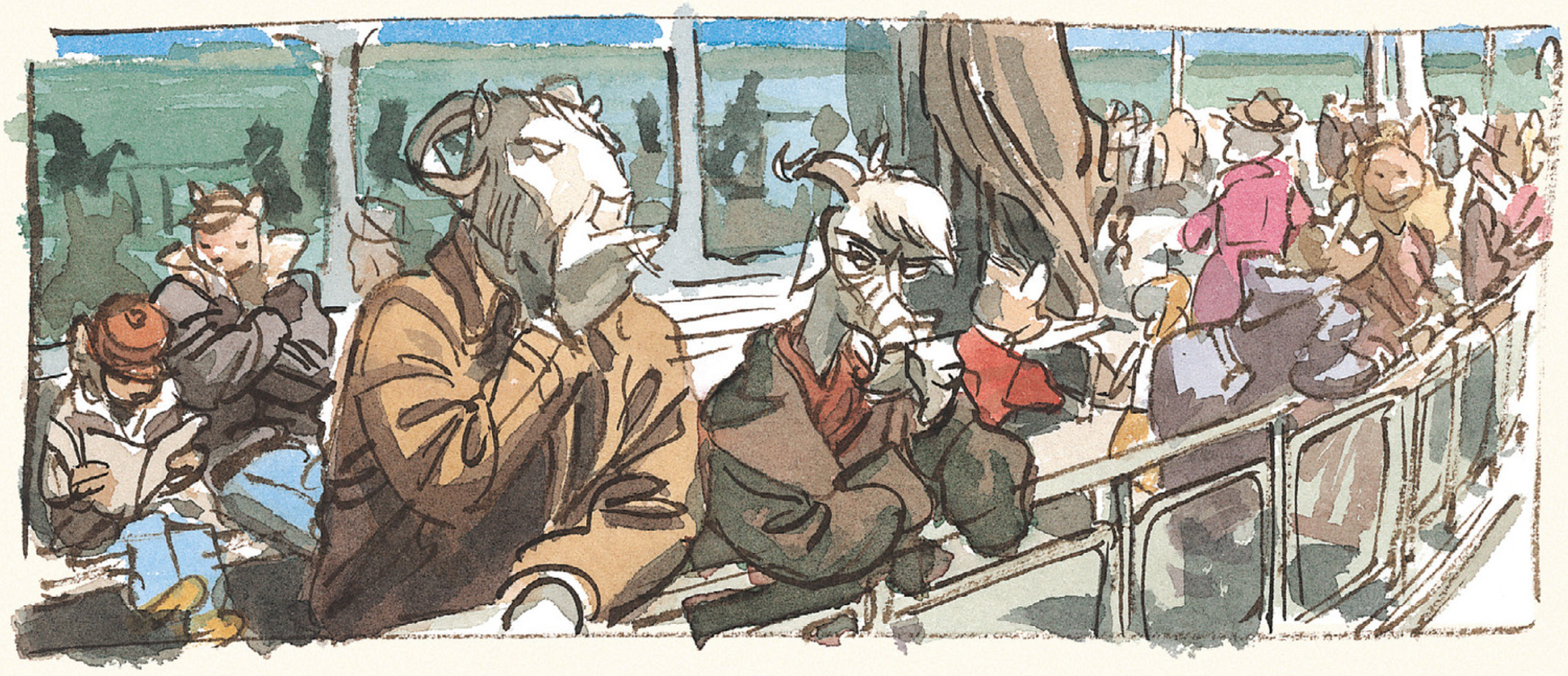
Hannah's recollection of the picnic at which Lenoir hands Sebastian the lyrics for "Pizen Blues" brings us back once again to a daytime sequence. The countryside setting forced me to immerse myself in greenery, something that, much to the contrary, I don't normally do. It was nonetheless pleasant to work with this palette and to incorporate touches of vibrant color here and there . . . The segmented approach to the shade of the leaves lent itself to a base of green tones, in contrast to the bluish tones of the urban scenes. As per usual for her, Dargaud's head of production Joëlle Rémy did a remarkable job preserving the almost fluorescent greens of this sequence in the graphic album.*

Ever since the fifties, and even before, neon signs have been found on Bourbon Street—witness Elia Kazan's *Panic in the Streets*, with Richard Widmark and Jack Palance (as creepy as only he knew how to be, right from the start of his career)—and throughout the city, for that matter. (Some have survived for decades up to the present—true urban landmarks!)

** Editor's note: Fluorescent colors tend not to reproduce very faithfully in the scanning process and require extra care in production.*

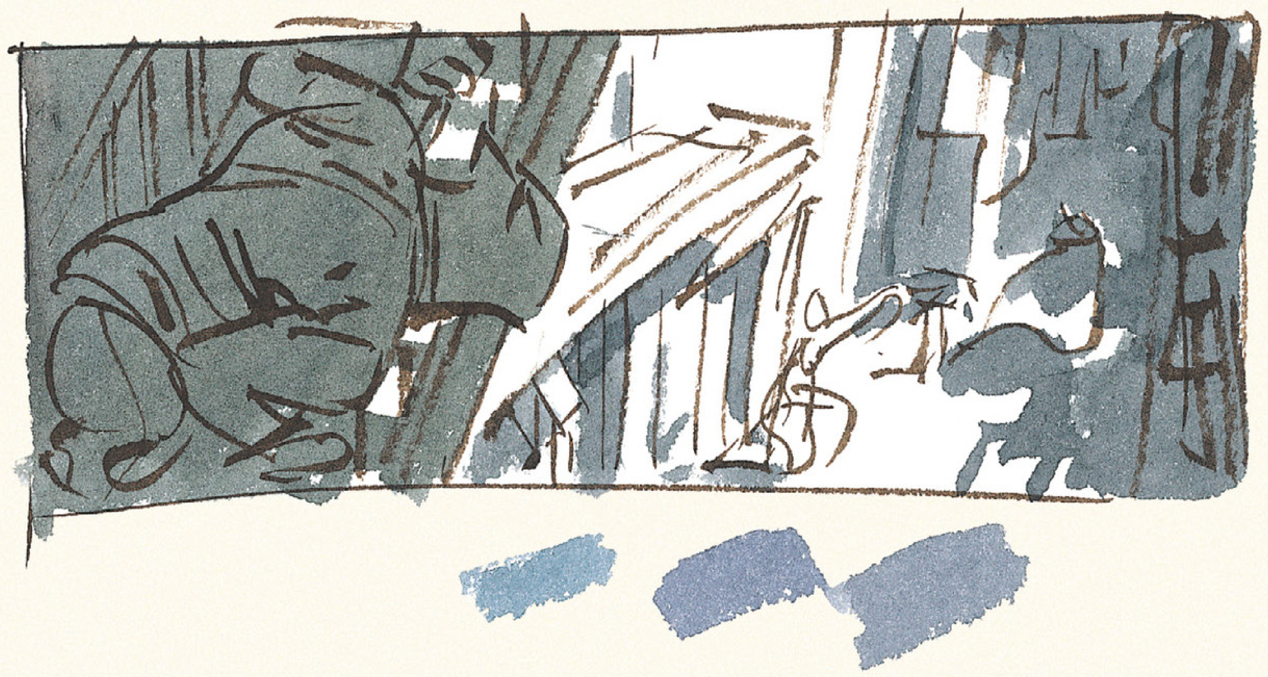
Always a joy, the moments with Weekly . . . A somber palette with sepia tones served to evoke the aging bulbs and carpets of indeterminate color that hint at the type of hotel where Junior Harper is holed up. The general ambiance remains hot (and not just on the color scale . . . ha, ha, good joke!), in contrast to the cold, violet light entering the window and surrounding Weekly, a contrast that works quite naturally in the panel where he bends towards his macabre discovery.

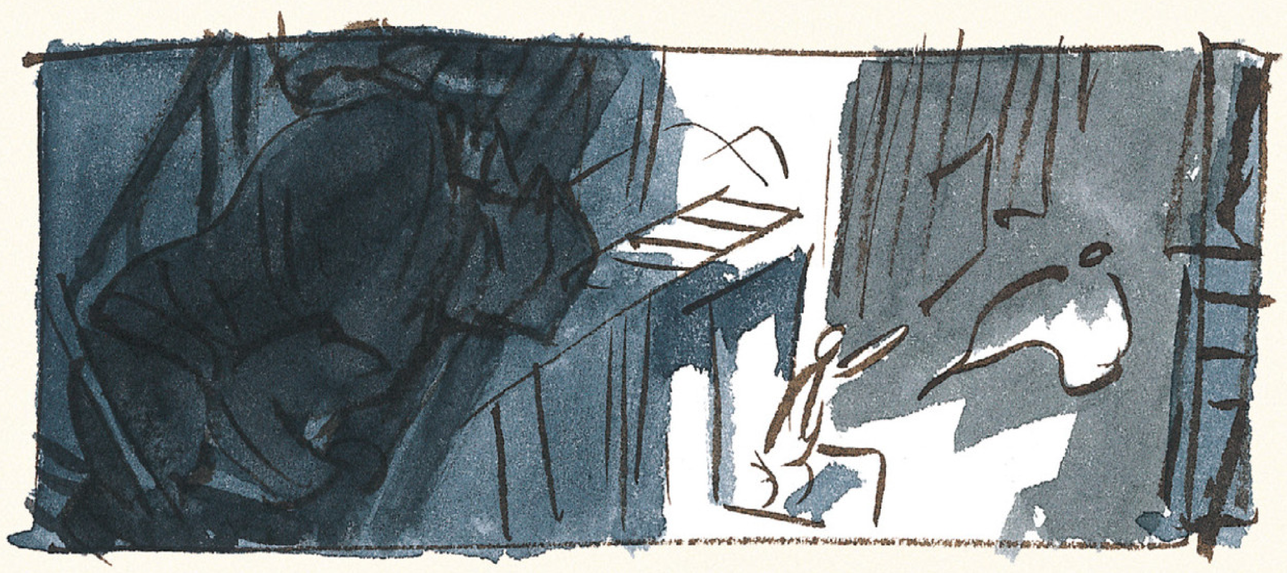




I can assure you that it is quite something to find oneself face to face for the first time with the Mississippi River . . . I'm told that the SS *President* is still in use today, converted into a casino somewhere on the East Coast of the United States. For a long time it served as a pleasure ship and floating party room in New Orleans. My idea was to communicate a sense of cold and of nice weather at the same time. In any case, this was accomplished more through the drawing than through the coloring.

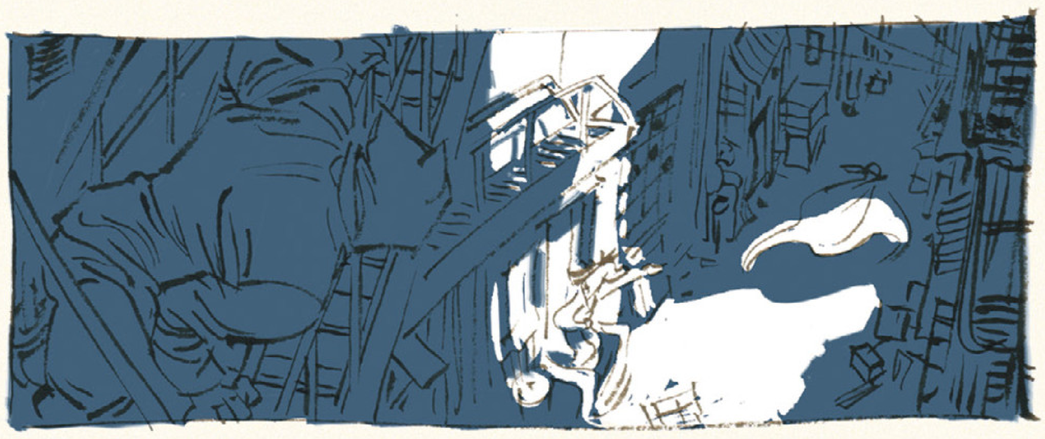
The scene in Faust's office at the beginning of the book required dealing with candlelit surroundings. This time the resolution of that problem was less complicated, as there was no secondary light source. For the finished panel I left the flames white with a touch of yellow, rather than completely yellow as they are in this sketch. The foreground took on a violet tone—cold—in response to the golden light—warm. A simple shade successfully allowed Blacksad's suit to pass as green in this overall atmosphere. Test it yourself: take a small green object or piece of paper and put it next to him for comparison . . .

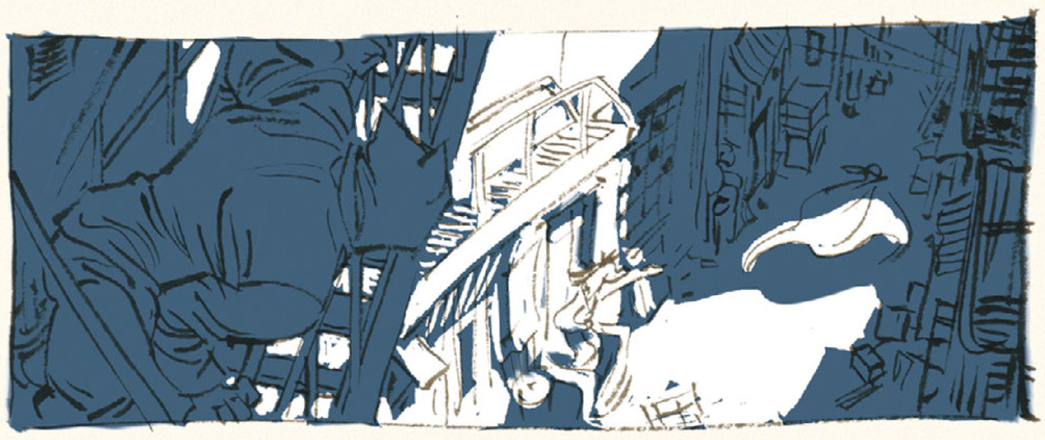




My thinking about the lighting of the alley sequence was more concerned with the "tonal" work (the distribution of light and shadow) than with the actual palette: the colors were "easily" resolved by a bluish shading at the base; the light in a range of ocher tones and beiges allowed the luminosity of the paper itself to seep through; the touch of red complemented the appeal of the whole.

On the other hand, it was harder to find the tonal composition for each panel: indeed, I made sketches for almost all of them, and produced even more on the computer . . . in particular, for the one in which we discover Blacksad perched on the edge of the fire escape. This drawing might easily have lost its readability, except for my darkening the silhouette, almost to an artificial point, against the bright background.





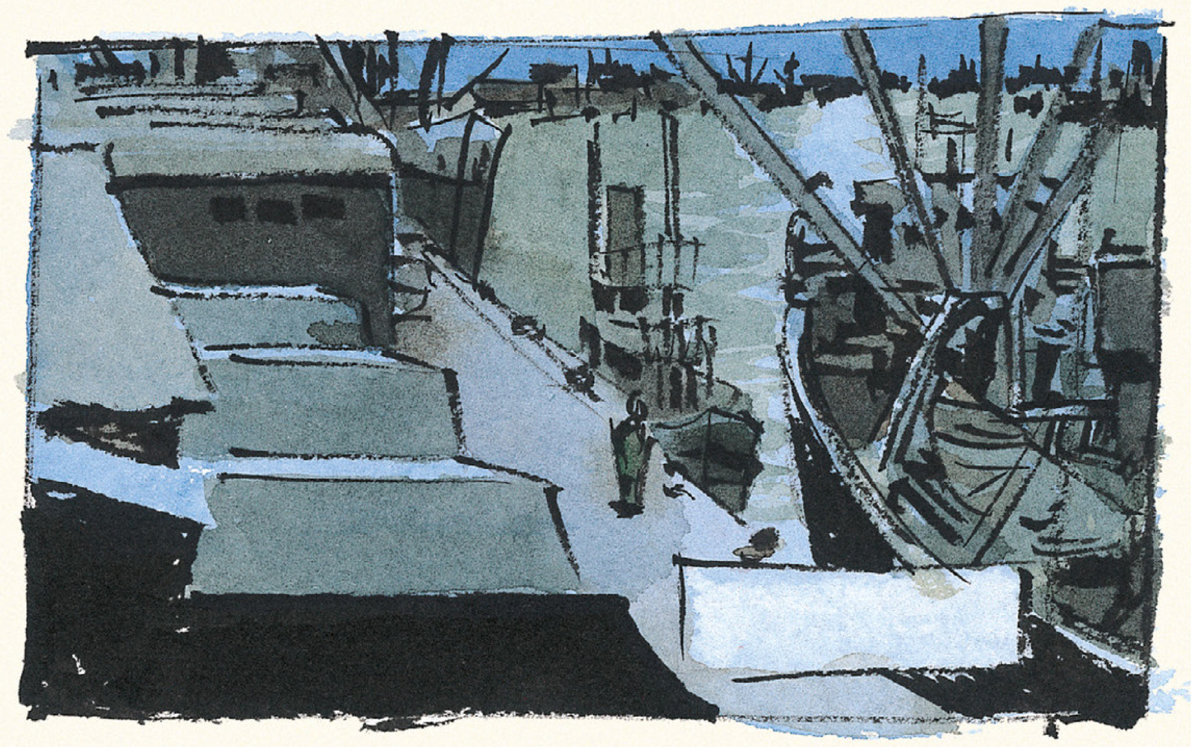
This small sketch seemed so accurate to me that I was determined to reproduce its exact line and luminous composition in the finished panel. I also tried to heighten the green tint of Blacksad's suit.

If you recall the scene in Statoc's office from the first book, a similar thing happened with this image: several sketches all arrived at more or less the same result, by way of different paths. With each new study I tried a new approach, with a different chromatic base as my departure point, but as I continued, the results became progressively similar . . . You'll have no trouble believing me when I say that this was the most difficult image to execute in the entire book . . . A plethora of pencil sketches, a profusion of tonal studies on the computer, and a stressful inking effort were followed by a fallow period of more than a month, which was necessary in order to get to the state of mind required to approach such an ambitious image with at least some confidence, particularly since none of the color studies were convincing to me at that stage. My friend José Luis Munuera, privy to my artist's block, bombarded me with his radical vision of the

solution: “If I can be allowed a suggestion, I would treat it in an almost monochromatic way, except for the balloons and the king; as if it were a street in shadow, the shadow (moreover, the guy writes like a slob) of the buildings on the left projecting onto the crowd, a few beams of light on the façades at right and on the background buildings; but I don’t understand a damn thing about color; ehh . . .” My response: “Man, you’re out of your mind, it’s irrelevant, it doesn’t fit with the time of day or with the rest of the scene . . . but you might very well have figured it out after all.” A few more weeks of stress and one big dose of joy later, I delivered to Dargaud the page that you see in the graphic album. Other than a few details, I applied José Luis’s ideas to the letter—damn him! He earned a thank-you and more in the book itself. But that’s a small thing for such a great character. As I often tell him: I’m sending you a big bear hug right now, you old bastard.

I no longer know by what mechanism or criterion I slipped into a nocturnal palette built around a *blue* sky, whereas I had previously painted it violet. I would be lying if I said I developed these sketches unequivocally with the goal of portraying the sky as more open, or clear, as a counterpoint to more profuse, less well illuminated settings, like the slum where Madame Gibraltar's caravan makes its home, or the deserted port at night; or with the intention of rendering the sequence chromatically congruent with the next scene, where Blacksad falls in the water. In any case, I'm happy I made this choice, because it is also an ideal background for the little touches of starlight.

In addition to the blue sky, a pale blue-gray was the background for the port setting, and effectively portrayed the bright moonlight on the better-lit surfaces, such as the rooftops or the wooden docks, and especially on the shimmering waters of the river.

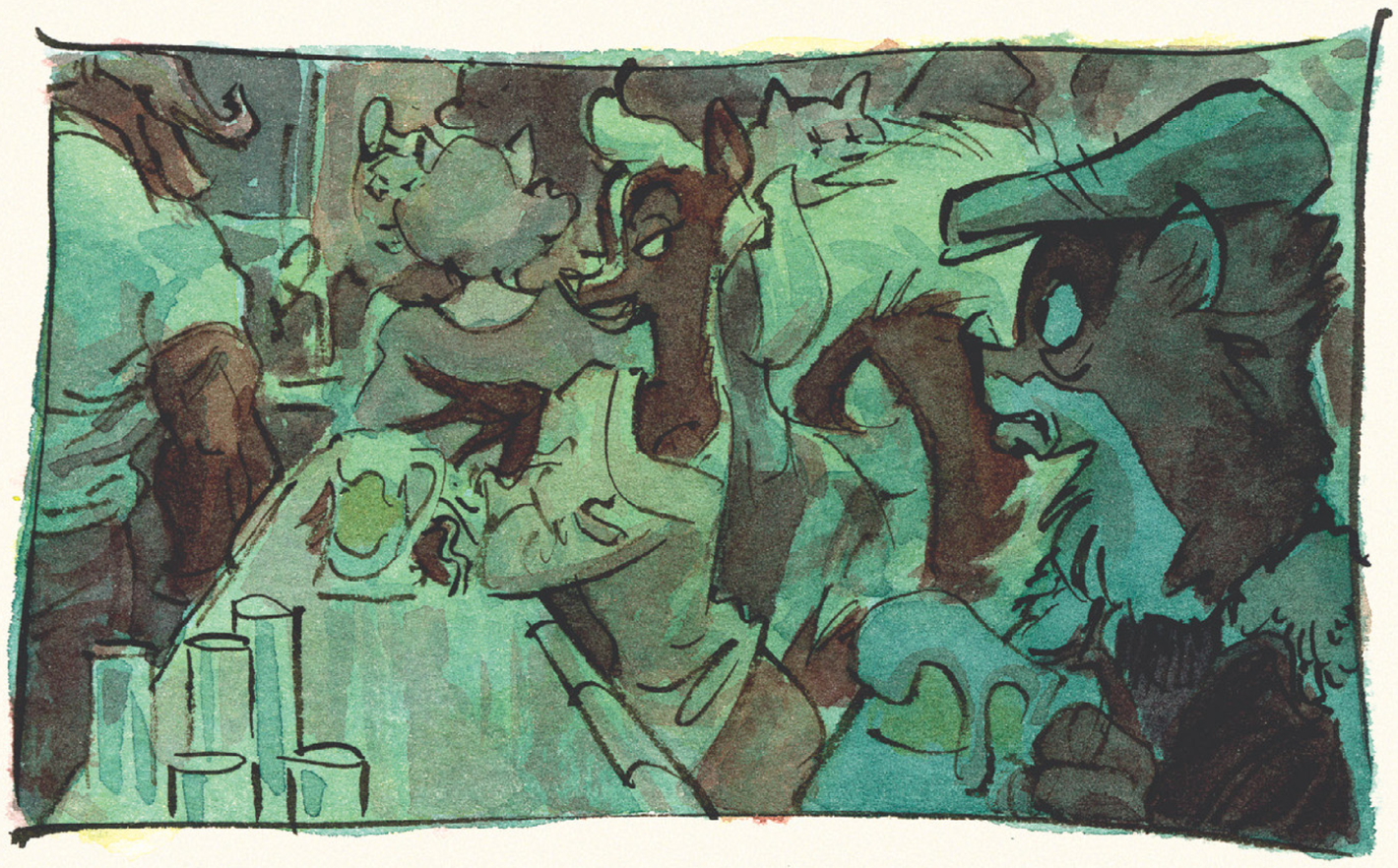


In this context, subtle shades of green or red simulate other colors while blending in with this scene's inherently limited palette. Try this experiment, just for fun: place a red object next to Leeman's tie in this illustration, and you'll see that what you took as a fairly intense red only *appears* as such . . .

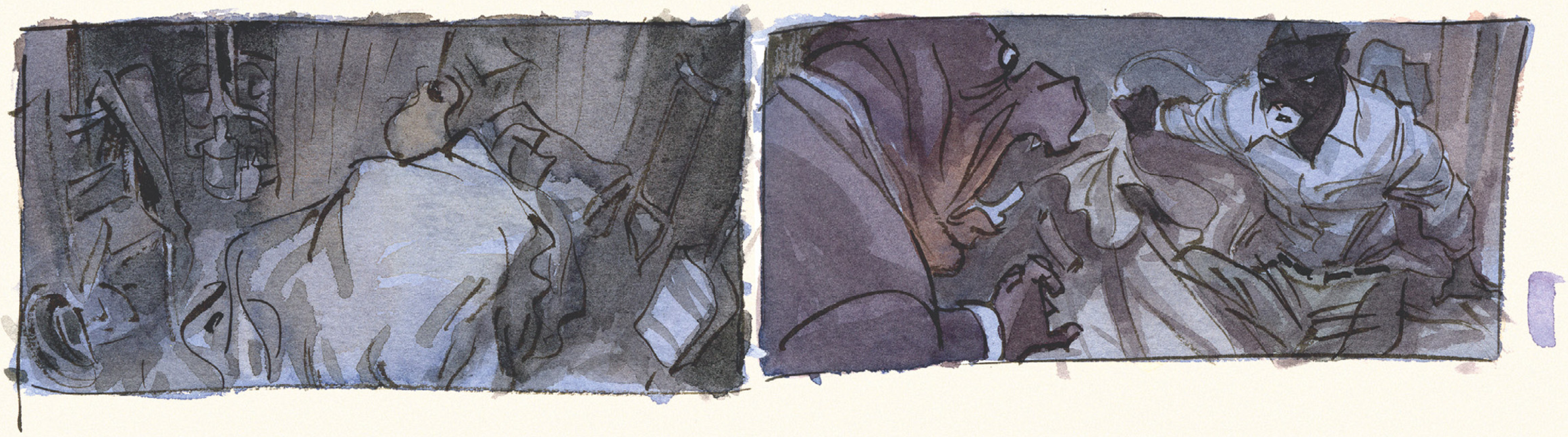
The next two pages strongly partake of a kind of prismatic frenzy that reinforces the delirium of both the subject and the drawing . . . As the two sketches demonstrate, there is an "evolution" in the palette from blue (the water) to red (blood), and then to yellow (a golden age that never was), and even to pink (for the impossible "vie en rose"), and beyond that to brown, signaling a return to reality, to Sebastian's actual life of shit. This symbolism is as elementary as it is effective, and (why not admit it?) just as valid a starting point as any other for developing an idea . . . It was really about this time—with the alleyway sequence and the figure of Death in his vivid red cape—that I rediscovered the watercolor process with an astonishing joy. Aided and abetted by the flexibility of my new paper (the excellent Sennelier Cold Pressed, which I mention in passing not as a plug but simply for those who are interested), I discovered gestural methods of applying color that produce cleaner and more integrated results, especially on medium- and large-sized surfaces. At that same time, a conversation about watercolor techniques with my friend Mara (creator of the *Clues* series published by Akileos) gave me the concept that perfectly articulates the effects I was trying out on my pages just then: the famous "drop" of watercolor. Mara got this insight from her friend Valp (creator of *Ashrel* at Delcourt and *Lock* at Paquet), who, unless I am mistaken, learned it at *l'École des arts décoratifs** in Geneva (which just goes to show that there are still things to be learned in art school, after all). In fact, the watercolor swatch is nothing more than a drop of water applied to the page and modeled by "stretching" it and "feeding" it. It's staggering how useful this apparently simple concept is in order to understand how to manipulate watercolor for the best possible results: always "feeding" paint to the interior of this droplet, then extending it with the brush by "stretching" it towards the surface that must be covered. A new effect, an enormous step towards the true pleasure of the work . . . Thanks, ladies!

* *The School of Decorative Arts.*

Okay, back to life and to the harsh reality of the most desolate docks in New Orleans . . . Again a starry blue sky and the palette of the preceding scene at the port, but enhanced, now, by the touch of orange brought in by the mysterious character of the unknown cat. Certainly a great pleasure at this point in the book, and a tip of the hat to the city itself, was to draw the first of the Crescent City bridges at the moment of its construction.

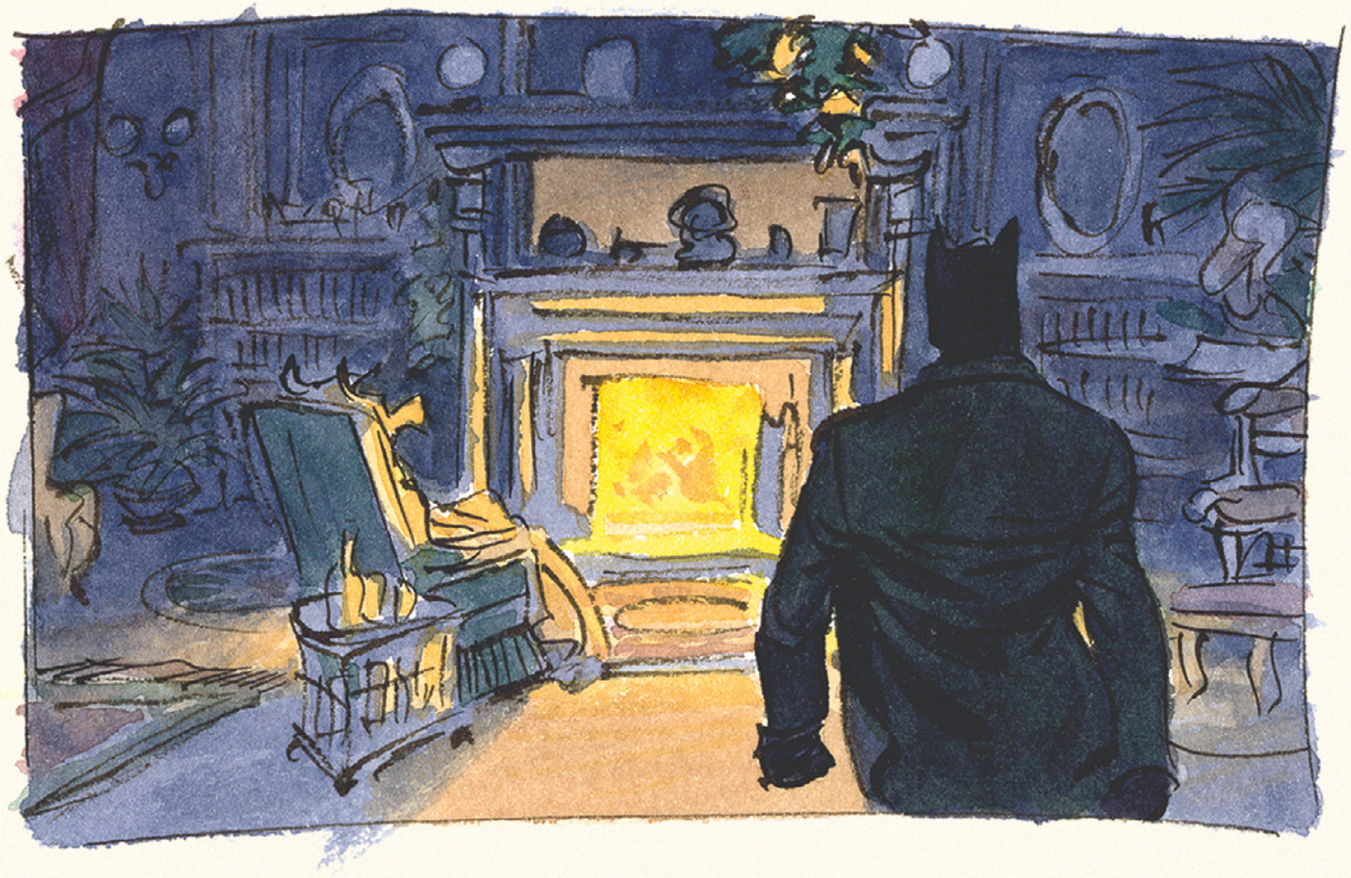


As had already occurred with each previous volume, my sketches became fewer and farther between as the book progressed. With delivery deadlines looming, one gets the impression that less and less time need be spent on the preliminary work—though, in fact, that work is no less necessary. I almost jumped in without a net to the sequence in which Weekly first meets Rose, since I had a clear enough idea of the kind of palette I wanted to develop there, having just watched a scene in the *Wolverine* film that had given me some ideas for the different shades I might use to complement the overall green tone. Happily, prudence intervened and I made the above sketch, which allowed me to explore certain grayer and then redder variations of the dark tones required for shading, and for the darker skins, in this scene. The yellow of the beer is barely visible . . .



The next sequence returns us to a somber color scheme, with the violet cast of the nighttime scenes picking back up from the first part of the book. I used the base tone again both for white surfaces and for any that are lit by the moon. For the parts that are almost completely submerged in darkness, the tones move into sepias or even right into black.

In retrospect, both the range of this sequence as well as its contrast between yellows and violets remind me of certain scenes from the factory in *Arctic Nation*, but I was trying, here, for a more bluish violet that would faintly evoke the night outside Faust's manor, without having the lighting lean into shades of orange, a dangerous color because I find it difficult to control. This is perhaps due to a tricky aspect of the chemically created red that I use: the "fresh" color that is visible at the moment of application changes as it dries, becoming a little redder. Although I have doubts about the durability of chemically created pigments, I have to admit that I tend to use them more and more, due to their capacity to survive being swept away by overlaid layers of watercolor washes, as opposed to pigments of mineral origin, whose instability can be tedious. As I have said elsewhere, true watercolorists use this instability as an asset. Lately I prefer to avoid the less stable colors, even limiting myself at times to the primaries . . .



It wasn't for reasons of aestheticism that I made a sketch of this three-panel sequence from the comic: I was interested to see what happens when "details" from the central image are arranged in framing panels but treated with different colors. Logic dictates that the close-ups are shot by a hypothetical camera that sits in front of the fireplace and "zooms" in on the faces—and not by the same camera that provides the wide-angle view of the fire. It was also necessary that the sequence not be perceived as either incomprehensible or a mistake . . . Much to the contrary, I found that this kind of triptych works rather well.

The panel featuring Sebastian's death, one of the key moments in the book, required an enormous amount of work and many preliminary sketches. It evolved a great deal, and presented an obvious compositional problem in regard to the lighting, stemming from two clear but conflicting choices: either Sebastian would be in the light and defined by strong contrast, in which case the background would be veiled in shadow, with the corpse's lambent silhouette outlined against it and the figure of Blacksad discreetly receding into the surroundings; or the panel would be strongly backlit, thus illuminating both Blacksad and the background with high-contrast lighting, while Sebastian himself would stay practically monochrome, his blue shirt losing its luster for the first time in the book. The backlit silhouette not only delineated the character in a clear and legible way, but also brought with it a very strong visual suggestion of death, perhaps for subliminal reasons. Initially, this seemed to me the better choice. But later, staring at the other sketch, sometimes through slitted eyes, I gradually began to appreciate its more realistic, less ephemeral look, with Sebastian's inanimate body gaining prominence in the "hollow" of the stall, in front of Blacksad and the broken door. I had the opportunity to show my friend Mara these two sketches, and she had an interesting thought about the lighting in the first one: it suggests a spotlight on Sebastian—his final spotlight, in fact—closing out his last act . . . At first this seemed vague to me, but the more I looked at the image with this idea in mind, the more convincing—and pertinent—I found it. It coincides absolutely with the sense of tragic destiny that makes Sebastian such a rich and moving character. The broken door giving shape to the light of the meager bulb that one might imagine in such a bathroom further served to support more of a circular framing on the finished page, more of a spotlight effect to the lighting.

As I had already worked out the necessary color and lighting solutions for the final sequence, these sketches were the last ones that I made for *A Silent Hell* . . . which seems to entail ending this essay on a sad note: with my comments on the tragic death scene, bringing to mind gallery owner Christian Desbois, whose absence weighed heavily on this book . . .

Instead, it seems preferable to conclude on a positive note: Thank you, Mara. ◆

SHORT STORIES

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Translation by

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TOM ORZECHOWSKI AND LOIS BUHALIS

SPIT AT THE SKY

I RARELY WATCH TELEVISION, AND WHENEVER I DO, I ALWAYS REGRET IT.

THE NEWS
CHINESE ATTACK IN NORTH KOREA
MACARTHUR THREATENS BEIJING WITH A-BOMB

BUT THE OTHER DAY, I SAW A COMEDIAN WHO GAVE ME PAUSE. THE GUY HAD A CURIOUS THEORY: THAT PEOPLE FIT INTO ONE OF THREE GROUPS, DEPENDING ON THE WAY THEY SPIT.

THE MAJORITY EXPECTORATE TO THE GROUND. THESE PEOPLE TEND TO BE RESIGNED, AND GO THROUGH LIFE WITHOUT EVER STANDING UP STRAIGHT.

THEN THERE ARE THOSE WHO SPLUTTER WHILE TALKING...

THIS MAN MURDERED MY TWO SONS... I'M JUST ASKING FOR WHAT'S RIGHT... WON'T YOU HELP ME FIND HIM? YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO UPHOLD THE LAW...

MA'AM, FOR THE LAST TIME...!

...USUALLY IN THE DIRECTION OF THEIR LISTENER. THIS SECOND GROUP IS THE MOST AGGRESSIVE...

...AND COMPOSED OF MORE OR LESS VIOLENT TYPES. TYPICALLY, THEY ARE THE RULING CLASS.

JUST TRY IT! I'M NOT AFRAID OF YOU!

IF YOU DON'T GET OUT OF MY FACE, I WILL ARREST YOU FOR DISTURBING THE PEACE!

FINALLY, THERE ARE THE NUTS AND IDEALISTS, WHO SPIT AT THE SKY...

FORGIVE HER, OFFICER. SHE'S MY NEIGHBOR... LATELY SHE'S BEEN A LITTLE UPSET...

...KNOWING THAT, INEVITABLY, THEY ARE SPITTING ON THEMSELVES.

...TOO MUCH TELEVISION!

SHE WASN'T REALLY MY NEIGHBOR, BUT A FORMER CLIENT. AT THE TIME, I HADN'T FOLLOWED UP ON HER CASE, SO I FELT A MORAL OBLIGATION TOWARDS HER...

NOW I REMEMBER. YOU'RE THE DETECTIVE... HAVE YOU DECIDED TO HELP ME AFTER ALL?

I TOLD YOU BEFORE, MA'AM, THE FELLOW YOU'RE LOOKING FOR IS TOO POWERFUL. A SECOND-RATE SHAMUS LIKE ME WOULDN'T STAND A CHANCE AGAINST SOMEONE LIKE HIM...

BUT AREN'T WE *ALL* EQUAL IN THE EYES OF THE LAW? THIS MAN CAME TO MY HOUSE AND CONVINCED MY BABIES, JOSEPH AND BENJAMIN, TO GO WORK FOR HIM. HE PROMISED THEM A GOOD JOB, AND SWORE THEY WERE MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE...

I KNOW HIM, I HAVE HIS PICTURE, I KNOW HE MURDERED MY CHILDREN, AND YET NO ONE SEEMS ABLE TO BRING HIM TO JUSTICE...

...WE GET THE WORLD THAT WE DESERVE.

MY ELDEST SON WOULD BE YOUR AGE NOW, IF NOT FOR THIS BRUTE.

DO ME A FAVOR, PLEASE. HOLD ONTO THIS IN CASE YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND SOMEDAY AND DECIDE TO HELP ME FIND HIM.

I KNEW THIS BIRD, ALL RIGHT. HE'D TRICKED ME, TOO, WITH HIS PROMISES OF A BETTER WORLD.

I'D DISCOVERED HIS LIES IN A LOST FIELD IN EUROPE, STREWN WITH CORPSES. TODAY, MANY YOUNG MEN WERE NO DOUBT FINDING THOSE SAME LIES, IN SOME KOREAN VILLAGE...

I WANT YOU FOR U.S. ARMY

I PUT THE POSTER UP WITH THE REST OF MY "PENDING" CASES, AND WENT OUT TO DO SOME CHRISTMAS SHOPPING... WITH AN OVERWHELMING URGE TO SPIT AT THE SKY.

END

LIKE CATS AND DOGS

816
HOTELS ARE SUCH STRANGE PLACES.
WITH PEOPLE FROM ALL FOUR CORNERS OF THE EARTH CLUSTERED INSIDE THE SAME FOUR WALLS. PEOPLE WHO CHANGE HABITAT, BUT NOT HABITS.
TV SHOW!
PARIS
STAGE AND SCREEN SHOW
AS IF ACTING OUT THE SAME IMMUTABLE SCRIPT, WRITTEN IN THE TWILIGHT OF TIME.
TWELVE HOURS WITHOUT A BITE, AND I'M STILL NOT HUNGRY. MY STOMACH IS TANGLED IN KNOTS.

SALVATION ARMY

SNACK

MAYBE I'M CHOKING ON THE TEDIUM OF SCENES PLAYED OVER AND OVER AGAIN. LIKE SOME MONOTONOUS REFRAIN, WHOSE SOUR NOTES ARE JUST TOO OFF-KEY FOR REAL MUSIC.

BIT BY BIT, MY STOMACH SETTLES. AND THOUGH THE NIGHT IS STILL LONG, I KNOW WHAT WILL HELP ME DIGEST THE GLOOM.

COFFEE SHOP

A COFFEE...

...AND A FRIEND.

JUANJO GUARNIDO & JUAN DÍAZ CANALES
2003

END

JUAN DÍAZ CANALES

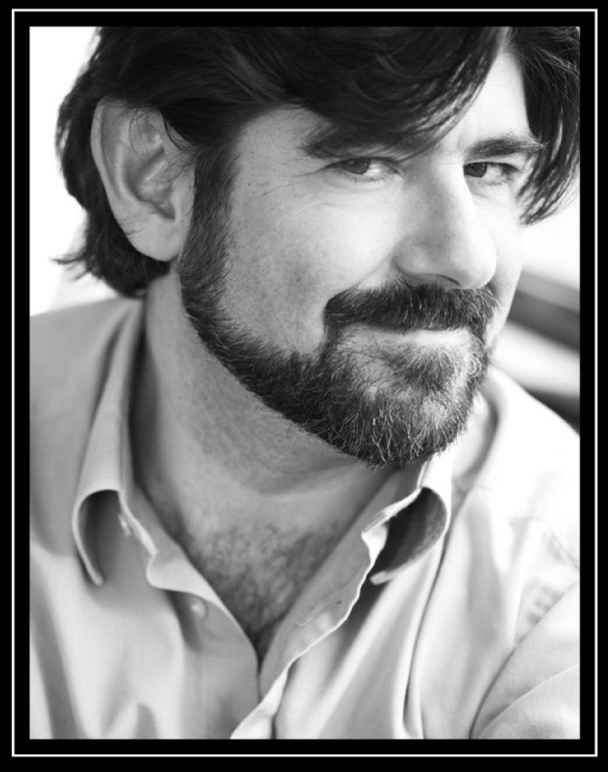
Born in Madrid in 1972, Díaz Canales was a comics enthusiast from the very beginning. In 1990, at age eighteen, he was hired to do layout art for the Spanish animation studio Lápiz Azul, where he met Juanjo Guarnido. The two quickly became close friends and remained in contact after Guarnido moved to Paris in 1993 to work for the French satellite Disney animation studio. Distance, however, did not prevent the two friends from trading ideas about the comics project that would become *Blacksad*, a series of graphic albums written by Díaz Canales in the hard-boiled style of 1950s noir fiction.

During this time, Díaz Canales also studied fine arts at Universidad Complutense de Madrid until 1996, when he founded the Tridente Animación studio with three colleagues. This led to a variety of work for European and American companies. Currently the writer alternates between scripting comics and storyboarding television animated series and feature films.

Launched in the year 2000 to tremendous critical acclaim, *Blacksad* was Díaz Canales's first published work in comics. He has since collaborated with several artists, including José Luis Munuera on the graphic album *Fraternity*.

KATIE LaBARBERA

Katie LaBarbera works as a reference librarian for a public library. Her most recent translation is for Martí's *The Cabbie,* published by Fantagraphics Books. She lives in St. Louis with her husband and her cat.



© Rita Scaglia

JUANJO GUARNIDO

Juanjo Guarnido was born in Granada, Spain, in 1967.

He spent his childhood drawing, in the town of Salobreña on the Mediterranean coast, before moving north to Granada with his family. There he began contributing to many local fanzines and studied fine arts, obtaining his degree from Universidad de Granada. At this time, Guarnido also had illustrations published by Comics Forum—the division of Planeta DeAgostini producing Spanish-language editions of Marvel's comics—which allowed the artist to reach a wider audience in his native country. He turned next to animation, moving to Madrid to spend three years working on various television shows under the aegis of the Lápiz Azul animation studio.

On his first day at Lápiz Azul, Guarnido met Juan Díaz Canales, who would become his friend and the writer of *Blacksad*. In 1993, Guarnido moved to Paris to join the Walt Disney Studios satellite in Montreuil, first as a layout artist on *A Goofy Movie*, Mickey's *Runaway Brain*, and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, then becoming an animator on such films as *Hercules*, *Tarzan*, and *Atlantis*. Guarnido also contributed his talents to both *The Jungle Book 2* and *Lorenzo* before the French Disney office closed down, ten years after he was first hired.

A longtime fan both of the European *bande dessinée* market and of American comics, Guarnido patiently began the production of his first graphic album while still at Disney, working long-distance with Díaz Canales toward the 2000 publication of *Blacksad: Somewhere within the Shadows*. The overwhelming success of the title has allowed Guarnido to take on other projects—like *Sorcelleries* with writer Teresa Valero—but his time is nonetheless primarily devoted to the adventures of John Blacksad.

BART BEATY

Bart Beaty is Professor and Head of the Department of English at the University of Calgary. He has written several books about comics, including *Unpopular Culture* (2007) and *Comics Versus Art* (2012).

WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

"All the News That's Fit to Print"

WHAT'S NEWS

LATE CITY EDITION

VOL. CN...N°38548 WEDNESDAY, JULY 18 FIVE CENTS

PRAISE FOR *BLACKSAD*!

"Grade: A. Feels like unearthed film-noir storyboards of a master."

—Entertainment Weekly

"Like any good gumshoe tale, the story's crammed with sex and violent gunplay, and Guarnido manages to set even his wackiest-looking characters within gritty, realistic backgrounds and lighting. His art is exquisitely sensitive to the nuances of facial expression and body language—not an easy feat with characters who are drawn as weasels, crows, or mice."

—Publishers Weekly

"The art is lush and vibrant and loaded with details and specificity . . . *Blacksad* is a beautiful crime comic with an interesting take on the hard-boiled PI story that would be a nice addition to any crime reader's shelf."

—Spinetingler Magazine

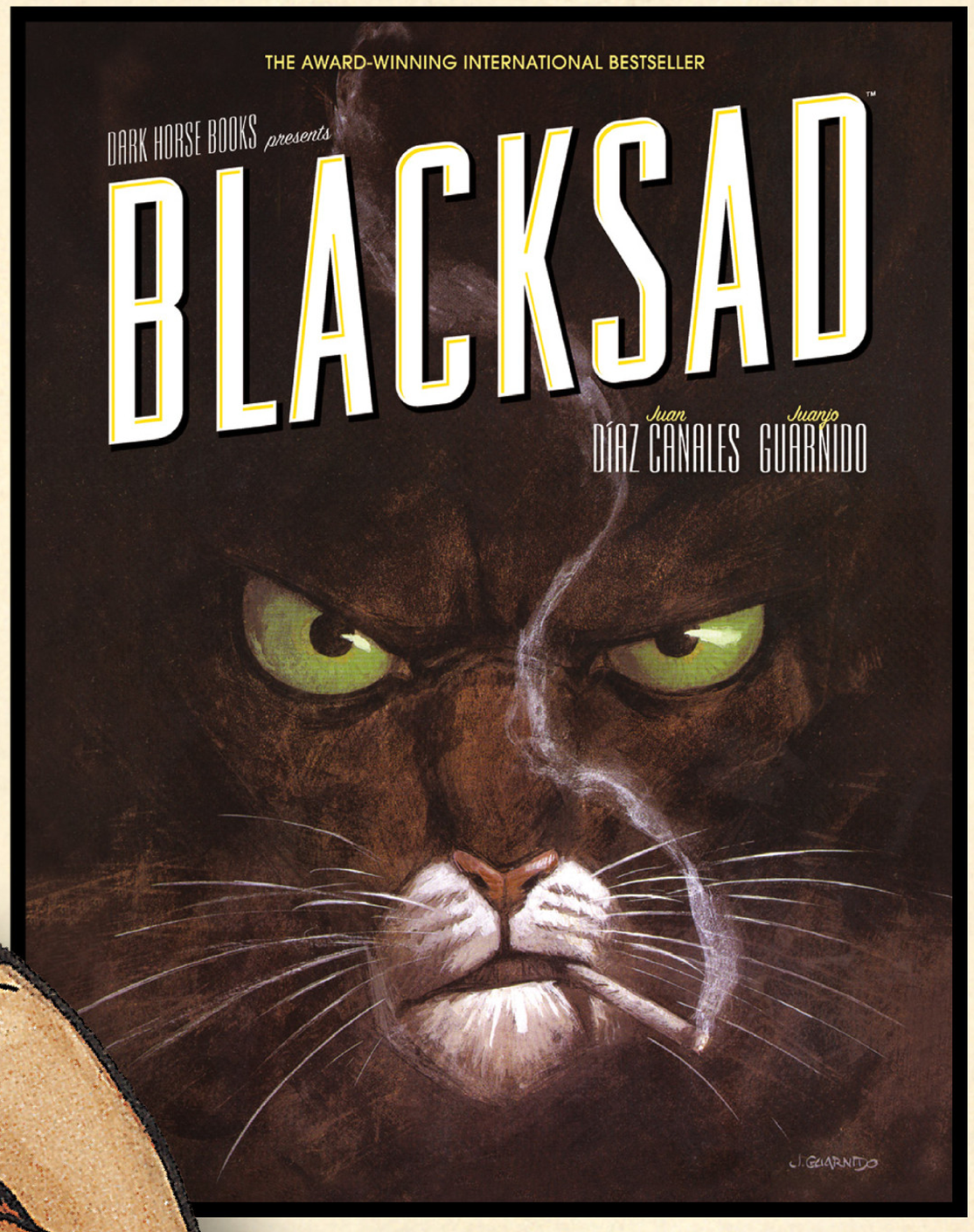
"*Blacksad* is one of those rare graphic nov[illegible]ould recomme[illegible] mysteri[illegible] roma[illegible] (My[illegible] C[illegible] t[illegible]

"A tour de force! Don't miss this!"

—Neal Adams

"As good as it gets!"

—Stan Lee



[illegible]ou, too. Like art? [illegible]ust see it. Just a [illegible]-fashioned good [illegible]it up. Now."

[illegible]Kepler's Books

"*Blacksad* is one of those comics that astounds you with every turn of the page. Its beautiful illustrations pop off the page with vibrant color and detail, while the writing is so sharp and deep that you can't help but feel you're getting but a small glimpse into a much, much larger world . . . belongs on any serious comics reader's shelf."

—Graphic Novel Reporter

"This is a tremendous comic. As always, it's the way these tales are told that makes them special, and Blacksad is a compelling character, as are most of the others in this book. Even if you're not a fan of noir, the art alone is worth checking out, because Guarnido does such a brilliant job on it."

—Comic Book Resources

"There is a compelling maturity about Guarnido's art that seems to invest his anthropomorphic cast with experience, vitality, and even dignity. He gets more out of his animal faces than most artists do from people faces . . . An amalgam of traditional European comics storytelling and American cinematic style."

—Jim Steranko

"Brilliant art and an unusual display of anthropomorphic realism."

—Will Eisner

"*Blacksad* ranks among the very best cartooning I've ever seen in comics, and this new comprehensive collection is a must for any enthusiast of visual storytelling. Seriously. Don't miss this one. It's the cat's pajamas."

—iFanboy

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"Don't miss this one. It's the cat's pajamas."
—iFanboy

"A lovingly crafted homage to the Hammett-Chandler chestnuts of old."
—Entertainment Weekly

BLACKSAD

Private investigator John Blacksad puts one of his nine lives on the line in this sizzling story of hot jazz and cold-blooded murder. Writer Juan Díaz Canales and artist Juanjo Guarnido join creative forces once again to deliver *A Silent Hell*, a grim tale of 1950s noir set against the colorful backdrop of New Orleans's fabled music scene. Hired to track down a missing pianist, Blacksad quickly finds himself in the midst of voodoo, drugs, the rollicking atmosphere of Mardi Gras, and the dark underbelly that it hides.

In addition to Eisner and Harvey awards, *Blacksad* and its creators have garnered a lengthy list of international honors, and the graphic albums featuring their feline detective have been translated into over twenty different languages. Now, *A Silent Hell* hits American shores fresh from its triumphant release in Europe, where it debuted as a best-selling book in France.

This edition also includes two never-before-collected Blacksad shorts as well as the complete translation of *The Watercolor Story*, an extensive art book originally published in France and Spain, filled with preliminary watercolor sketches, with text by illustrator Juanjo Guarnido detailing his meticulous production of the story in this volume.

Graphic Novel | Fiction | Crime

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